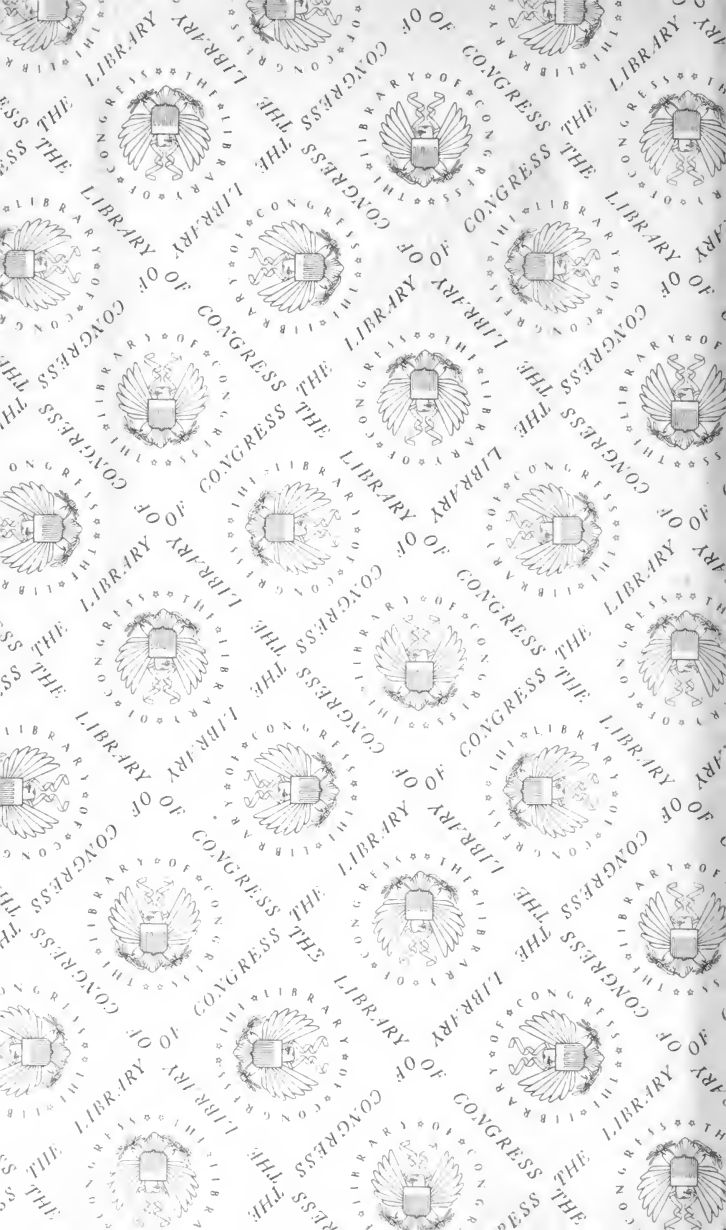
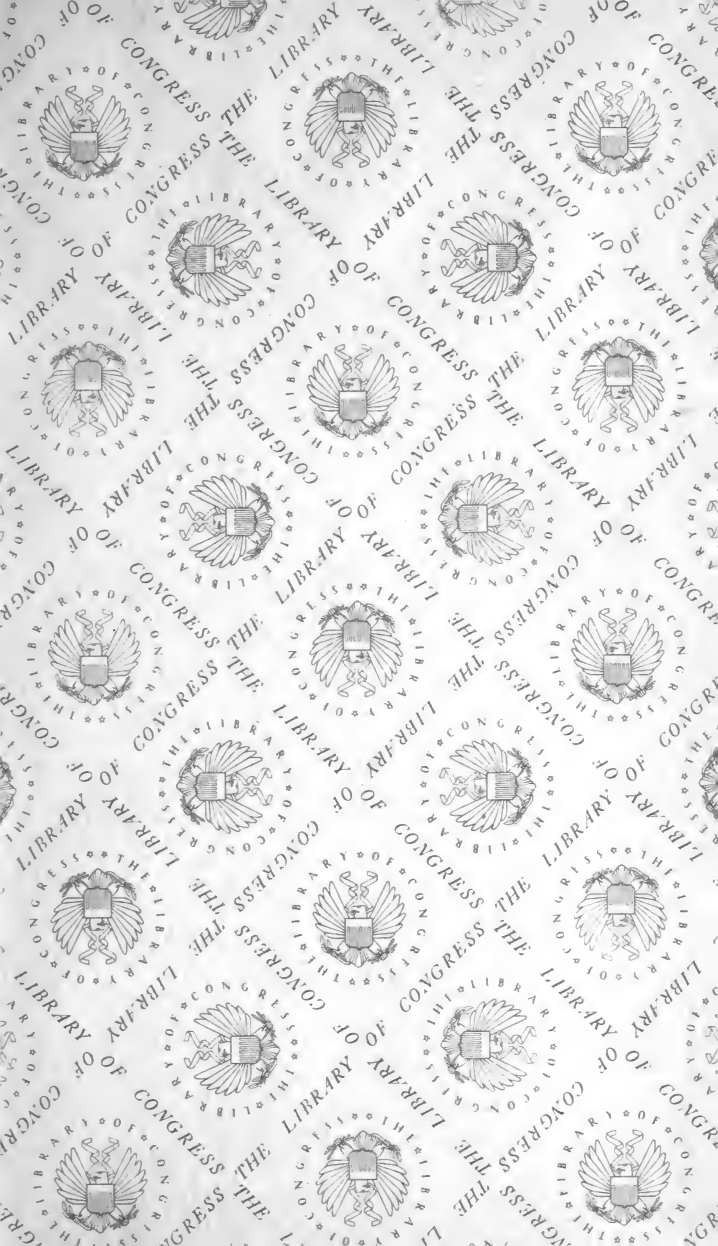


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THE
HOLY GRAIL,

AND OTHER POEMS.

✓ BY

ALFRED TENNYSON, D. C. L.,

||
POET LAUREATE.



✓ BOSTON:

J. E. TILTON AND COMPANY.

1870.
✓

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1870 a

THESE four "Idylls of the King" are printed in their present form for the convenience of those who possess the former volume.

The whole series should be read in the following order :—

THE COMING OF ARTHUR.

THE ROUND TABLE.

GERAINT AND ENID.

MERLIN AND VIVIEN.

LANCELOT AND ELAINE.

THE HOLY GRAIL.

PELLEAS AND ETTARRE.

GUINEVERE.

*THE PASSING OF ARTHUR.**

* This last, the earliest written of the poems, is here connected with the rest, in accordance with an early project of the author's.

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THE COMING OF ARTHUR.

LEODOGRAN, the King of Cameliard,
Had one fair daughter, and none other child;
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
Guinevere, and in her his one delight.

For many a petty king ere Arthur came
Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land;
And still from time to time the heathen host
Swarm'd overseas, and harried what was left.
And so there grew great tracts of wilderness,
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,
But man was less and less, till Arthur came.
For first Aurelius lived and fought and died,
And after him King Uther fought and died,
But either fail'd to make the kingdom one.
And after these King Arthur for a space,
And thro' the puissance of his Table Round,
Drew all their petty principedoms under him,
Their king and head, and made a realm, and reign'd.

And thus the land of Cameliard was waste,
Thick with wet woods, and many a beast therein,

And none or few to scare or chase the beast ;
So that wild dog and wolf and boar and bear
Came night and day, and rooted in the fields,
And wallow'd in the gardens of the king.
And ever and anon the wolf would steal
The children and devour, but now and then,
Her own brood lost or dead, lent her fierce teat
To human sucklings ; and the children, housed
In her foul den, there at their meat would growl,
And mock their foster-mother on four feet,
Till, straighten'd, they grew up to wolf-like men,
Worse than the wolves : and King Leodogran
Groan'd for the Roman legions here again,
And Cæsar's eagle : then his brother king,
Rience, assail'd him : last a heathen horde,
Reddening the sun with smoke and earth with blood,
And on the spike that split the mother's heart
Spitting the child, brake on him, till, amazed,
He knew not whither he should turn for aid.

But — for he heard of Arthur newly crown'd,
Tho' not without an uproar made by those
Who cried, " He is not Uther's son " — the king
Sent to him, saying, " Arise, and help us, thou !
For here between the man and beast we die."

And Arthur yet had done no deed of arms,
But heard the call, and came : and Guinevere
Stood by the castle walls to watch him pass ;
But since he neither wore on helm or shield
The golden symbol of his kinglihood,
But rode a simple knight among his knights,
And many of these in richer arms than he,
She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she saw,
One among many, tho' his face was bare.
But Arthur, looking downward as he past,
Felt the light of her eyes into his life
Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and pitch'd
His tents beside the forest : and he drave
The heathen, and he slew the beast, and fell'd
The forest, and let in the sun, and made

Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight,
And so return'd.

For while he linger'd there,
A doubt that ever smoulder'd in the hearts
Of those great Lords and Barons of his realm
Flash'd forth and into war : for most of these
Made head against him, crying, " Who is he
That he should rule us ? who hath proven him
King Uther's son ? for lo ! we look at him,
And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor voice,
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew.
This is the son of Gorloïs, not the king.
This is the son of Anton, not the king."

And Arthur, passing thence to battle, felt
Travail, and throes and agonies of the life,
Desiring to be join'd with Guinevere ;
And thinking as he rode, " Her father said
That there between the man and beast they die.
Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts
Up to my throne, and side by side with me ?
What happiness to reign a lonely king,
Vext — O ye stars, that shudder over me,
O earth, that soundest hollow under me —
Vext with waste dreams ? for saving I be join'd
To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
And cannot will my will, nor work my work
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm
Victor and lord ; but were I join'd with her,
Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
And power on this dead world to make it live."

And Arthur from the field of battle sent
Ulfus, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
His new-made knights, to King Leodogran,
Saying, " If I in aught have served thee well,
Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife."

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in heart
Debating — “ How should I that am a king,
However much he help me at my need,
Give my one daughter saving to a king,
And a king’s son ” — lifted his voice, and call’d
A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom
He trusted all things, and of him required
His counsel : “ Knowest thou aught of Arthur’s birth ? ”

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and said,
“ Sir King, there be but two old men that know :
And each is twice as old as I ; and one
Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served
King Uther thro’ his magic art ; and one
Is Merlin’s master (so they call him) Bleys,
Who taught him magic ; but the scholar ran
Before the master, and so far, that Bleys
Laid magic by, and sat him down, and wrote
All things and whatsoever Merlin did
In one great annal-book, where after years
Will learn the secret of our Arthur’s birth.”

To him the King Leodogran replied,
“ O friend, had I been holpen half as well
By this King Arthur as by thee to-day,
Then beast and man had had their share of me :
But summon here before us yet once more
Ulfus, and Brastias, and Bedivere.”

Then, when they came before him, the king said,
“ I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser fowl,
And reason in the chase : but wherefore now
Do these your lords stir up the heat of war,
Some calling Arthur born of Gorlois,
Others of Anton ? Tell me, ye yourselves,
Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther’s son ? ”

And Ulfus and Brastias answer’d, “ Ay.”
Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights,
Knighted by Arthur at his crowning, spake, —

For bold in heart and act and word was he,
Whenever slander breathed against the king, —

“ Sir, there be many rumors on this head :
For there be those who hate him in their hearts,
Call him baseborn, and since his ways are sweet,
And theirs are bestial, hold him less than man :
And there be those who deem him more than man,
And dream he dropt from heaven : but my belief
In all this matter — so ye care to learn —
Sir, for ye know that in King Uther’s time
The prince and warrior Gorloïs, he that held
Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,
Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne :
And daughters had she borne him, — one whereof
Lot’s wife, the queen of Orkney, Bellicent,
Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved
To Arthur, — but a son she had not borne.
And Uther cast upon her eyes of love :
But she, a stainless wife to Gorloïs,
So loathed the bright dishonor of his love
That Gorloïs and King Uther went to war :
And overthrown was Gorloïs and slain.
Then Uther in his wrath and heat besieged
Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,
Seeing the mighty swarm about their walls,
Left her and fled, and Uther enter’d in,
And there was none to call to but himself.
So, compass’d by the power of the king,
Enforced she was to wed him in her tears,
And with a shameful swiftness ; afterward,
Not many moons, King Uther died himself,
Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule
After him, lest the realm should go to wrack.
And that same night, the night of the new year,
By reason of the bitterness and grief
That vexed his mother, all before his time
Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born
Deliver’d at a secret postern-gate
To Merlin, to be holden far apart
Until his hour should come ; because the lords

Of that fierce day were as the lords of this,
Wild beasts, and surely would have torn the child
Piecemeal among them, had they known; for each
But sought to rule for his own self and hand,
And many hated Uther for the sake
Of Gorlois: wherefore Merlin took the child,
And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight
And ancient friend of Uther; and his wife
Nursed the young prince, and rear'd him with her own;
And no man knew: and ever since the lords
Have foughten like wild beasts among themselves,
So that the realm has gone to wrack: but now,
This year, when Merlin (for his hour had come)
Brought Arthur forth, and set him in the hall,
Proclaiming, 'Here is Uther's heir, your king,'
A hundred voices cried, 'Away with him!
No king of ours!' a son of Gorlois he:
Or else the child of Anton and no king,
Or else baseborn.' Yet Merlin thro' his craft
And while the people clamor'd for a king,
Had Arthur crown'd; but after, the great lords
Banded, and so brake out in open war."

Then while the king debated with himself
If Arthur were the child of shamefulness,
Or born the son of Gorlois, after death,
Or Uther's son, and born before his time,
Or whether there were truth in anything
Said by these three, there came to Cameliard,
With Gawain and young Modred, her two sons,
Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent;
Whom as he could, not as he would, the king
Made feast for, saying, as they sat at meat,

"A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas —
Ye come from Arthur's court: think ye this king —
So few his knights, however brave they be —
Hath body enow to beat his foemen down?"

"O king," she cried, "and I will tell thee: few,
Few, but all brave, all of one mind with him;

For I was near him when the savage yells
Of Uther's peerage died, and Arthur sat
Crowned on the daïs, and his warriors cried,
'Be thou the king, and we will work thy will
Who love thee.' Then the king in low deep tones,
And simple words of great authority,
Bound them by so strait vows to his own self,
That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some
Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
Some flush'd, and others dazed, as one who wakes
Half-blinded at the coming of a light.

"But when he spake and cheer'd his Table Round
With large, divine, and comfortable words
Beyond my tongue to tell thee — I beheld
From eye to eye thro' all their Order flash
A momentary likeness of the king ;
And ere it left their faces, thro' the cross
And those around it and the crucified,
Down from the casement over Arthur, smote
Flame-color, vert, and azure, in three rays,
One falling upon each of three fair queens,
Who stood in silence near his throne, the friends
Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright,
Sweet faces, who will help him at his need.

"And there I saw mage Merlin, whose vast wit
And hundred winters are but as the hands
Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege.

"And near him stood the Lady of the lake, —
Who knows a subtler magic than his own, —
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.
She gave the king his huge cross-hilted sword,
Whereby to drive the heathen out : a mist
Of incense curl'd about her, and her face
Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom,
But there was heard among the holy hymns
A voice as of the waters, for she dwells
Down in a deep, calm, whatsoever storms

May shake the world, and, when the surface rolls,
Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord.

“There likewise I beheld Excalibur
Before him at his crowning borne, — the sword
That rose from out the bosom of the lake,
And Arthur row’d across and took it, — rich
With jewels, elfin Urim, on the hilt,
Bewildering heart and eye, — the blade so bright
That men are blinded by it, — on one side,
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,
‘Take me,’ but turn the blade and you shall see,
And written in the speech ye speak yourself,
‘Cast me away!’ and sad was Arthur’s face
Taking it, but old Merlin counsell’d him,
‘Take thou and strike! the time to cast away
Is yet far off;’ so this great brand the king
Took, and by this will beat his foemen down.”

Thereat Leodogran rejoiced, but thought
To sift his doubtings to the last, and ask’d,
Fixing full eyes of question on her face,
“The swallow and the swift are near akin,
But thou art closer to this noble prince,
Being his own dear sister;” and she said,
“Daughter of Gorlois and Ygerne am I;”
“And therefore Arthur’s sister,” asked the King.
She answer’d, “These be secret things,” and sign’d
To those two sons to pass and let them be.
And Gawain went, and breaking into song
Sprang out, and follow’d by his flying hair
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw:
But Modred laid his ear beside the doors,
And there half heard; the same that afterward
Struck for the throne, and, striking, found his doom.

And then the Queen made answer, “What know I?
For dark my mother was in eyes and hair,
And dark in hair and eyes am I; and dark
Was Gorlois, yea, and dark was Uther too,
Wellnigh to blackness, but this king is fair

Beyond the race of Britons and of men.
Moreover always in my mind I hear
A cry from out the dawning of my life,
A mother weeping, and I hear her say,
'Oh that ye had some brother, pretty one,
To guard thee on the rough ways of the world.'

"Ay," said the King, "and hear ye such a cry?
But when did Arthur chance upon thee first?"

"O king!" she cried, "and I will tell thee true:
He found me first when yet a little maid —
Beaten I had been for a little fault
Whereof I was not guilty; and out I ran
And flung myself down on a bank of heath,
And hated this fair world and all therein,
And wept, and wish'd that I were dead; and he —
I know not whether of himself he came,
Or brought by Merlin, who, they say, can walk
Unseen, at pleasure — he was at my side,
And spake sweet words, and comforted my heart,
And dried my tears, being a child with me.
And many a time he came, and evermore,
As I grew, greater grew with me; and sad
At times he seem'd, and sad with him was I,
Stern too at times, and then I loved him not,
But sweet again, and then I loved him well.
And now of late I see him less and less,
But those first days had golden hours for me,
For then I surely thought he would be king.

"But let me tell thee now another tale:
For Bleys, our Merlin's master, as they say,
Died but of late, and sent his cry to me,
To hear him speak before he left his life.
Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the mage,
And, when I enter'd, told me that himself
And Merlin ever served about the king,
Uther, before he died, and on the night
When Uther in Tintagil past away
Moaning and wailing for an heir, the two

Left the still king, and passing forth to breathe,
Then from the castle gateway by the chasm
Descending thro' the dismal night — a night
In which the bounds of heaven and earth were lost —
Beheld — so high upon the dreary deeps
It seem'd in heaven — a ship, the shape thereof
A dragon wing'd, and all from stem to stern
Bright with a shining people on the decks,
And gone as soon as seen: and then the two
Dropt to the cove and watch'd the great sea fall,
Wave after wave, each mightier than the last,
Till, last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep
And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged
Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame:
And down the wave and in the flame was borne
A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,
Who stoópt and caught the babe, and cried, 'The King!
Here is an heir for Uther!' and the fringe
Of that great breaker, sweeping up the strand,
Lash'd at the wizard as he spake the word,
And all at once all round him rose in fire,
So that the child and he were clothed in fire.
And presently thereafter follow'd calm,
Free sky and stars: 'And this same child,' he said,
'Is he who reigns; nor could I part in peace
Till this were told.' And saying this the seer
Went thro' the strait and dreadful pass of death,
Not ever to be questioned any more
Save on the further side; but when I met
Merlin, and ask'd him if these things were truth, —
The shining dragon and the naked child
Descending in the glory of the seas, —
He laugh'd as is his wont, and answer'd me
In riddling triplets of old time, and said:

“‘Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in the sky!
A young man will be wiser by and by:
An old man's wit may wander ere he die.

Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the lea!
And truth is this to me, and that to thee;
And truth or clothed or naked let it be.

Rain, sun, and rain ! and the free blossom blows :
Sun, rain, and sun ! and where is he who knows ?
From the great deep to the great deep he goes.'

" So Merlin, riddling, anger'd me ; but thou
Fear not to give this king thine only child,
Guinevere : so great bards of him will sing
Hereafter, and dark sayings from of old
Ranging and ringing thro' the minds of men,
And echo'd by old folk beside their fires
For comfort after their wage-work is done,
Speak of the king ; and Merlin in our time
Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn,
Tho' men may wound him, that he will not die,
But pass, again to come ; and then or now
Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,
Till these and all men hail him for their king."

She spake and King Leodogran rejoiced,
But musing " Shall I answer yea or nay ? "
Doubted and drowsed, nodded and slept, and saw,
Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew,
Field after field, up to a height, the peak
Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom king,
Now looming, and now lost ; and on the slope
The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd was driven,
Fire glimpsed ; and all the land from roof and rick
In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind
Stream'd to the peak, and mingled with the haze
And made it thicker ; while the phantom king
Sent out at times a voice ; and here or there
Stood one who pointed toward the voice, the rest
Slew on and burnt, crying, " No king of ours,
No son of Uther, and no king of ours ; "
Till with a wink his dream was changed, the haze
Descended, and the solid earth became
As nothing, and the king stood out in heaven,
Crown'd ; and Leodogran awoke, and sent
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere
Back to the court of Arthur answering yea.

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom he loved
And honor'd most, Sir Lancelot, to ride forth
And bring the Queen ; — and watch'd him from the gates :
And Lancelot past away among the flowers,
(For then was latter April) and return'd
Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere.
To whom arrived, by Dubric the high saint,
Chief of the church in Britain, and before
The stateliest of her altar-shrines, the king
That morn was married, while in stainless white,
The fair beginners of a nobler time,
And glorying in their vows and him, his knights
Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy.
And holy Dubric spread his hands and spake,
“Reign ye, and live and love, and make the world
Other, and may thy Queen be one with thee,
And all this Order of thy Table Round
Fulfil the boundless purpose of their king.”

Then at the marriage feast came in from Rome,
The slowly-fading mistress of the world,
Great lords, who claim'd the tribute as of yore.
But Arthur spake, “Behold, for these have sworn
To fight my wars, and worship me their king ;
The old order changeth, yielding place to new ;
And we that fight for our fair father Christ,
Seeing that ye be grown too weak and old
To drive the heathen from your Roman wall,
No tribute will we pay : ” so those great lords
Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a space
Were all one will, and thro' that strength the king
Drew in the petty princedoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reign'd.

THE HOLY GRAIL.

FROM noiseful arms, and acts of prowess done
In tournament or tilt, Sir Percivale,
Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd The Pure,
Had pass'd into the silent life of prayer,
Praise, fast, and alms ; and leaving for the cowl
The helmet in an abbey far away
From Camelot, there, and not long after, died.

And one, a fellow-monk among the rest,
Ambrosius, loved him much beyond the rest,
And honor'd him, and wrought into his heart
A way by love that waken'd love within,
To answer that which came : and as they sat
Beneath a world-old yew-tree, darkening half
The cloisters, on a gustful April morn
That puffed the swaying branches into smoke
Above them, ere the summer when he died,
The monk Ambrosius questioned Percivale : —

“ O brother, I have seen this yew-tree smoke,
Spring after spring, for half a hundred years :
For never have I known the world without,
Nor ever strayed beyond the pale : but thee,

When first thou camest, — such a courtesy
Spake thro' the limbs and in the voice, — I knew
For one of those who eat in Arthur's hall;
For good ye are and bad, and like to coins,
Some true, some light, but every one of you
Stamp'd with the image of the king; and now
Tell me, what drove thee from the Table Round,
My brother? was it earthly passion crost?"

"Nay," said the knight; "for no such passion mine.
But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail
Drove me from all vain-glories, rivalries,
And earthly heats that spring and sparkle out
Among us in the jousts, while women watch
Who wins, who falls; and waste the spiritual strength
Within us, better offer'd up to Heaven."

To whom the monk: "The Holy Grail! — I trust
We are green in Heaven's eyes; but here too much
We moulder, — as to things without I mean, —
Yet one of your own knights, a guest of ours,
Told us of this in our refectory,
But spake with such a sadness and so low
We heard not half of what he said. What is it?
The phantom of a cup that comes and goes?"

"Nay, monk! what phantom?" answered Percivale.
"The cup, the cup itself, from which our Lord
Drank at the last sad supper with his own.
This, from the blessed land of Aromat —
After the day of darkness, when the dead
Went wandering o'er Moriah, the good saint,
Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord.
And there awhile it bode; and if a man
Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at once,
By faith, of all his ills; but then the times
Grew to such evil that the Holy cup
Was caught away to Heaven and disappear'd."

To whom the monk : " From our old books I know
That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,
And there the heathen Prince, Arviragus,
Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to build,
And there he built with wattles from the marsh
A little lonely church in days of yore,
For so they say, these books of ours, but seem
Mute of this miracle, far as I have read.
But who first saw the holy thing to-day ? "

" A woman," answered Percivale, " a nun,
And one no further off in blood from me
Than sister ; and if ever holy maid
With knees of adoration wore the stone,
A holy maid ; tho' never maiden glow'd,
But that was in her earlier maidenhood,
With such a fervent flame of human love,
Which being rudely blunted glanced and shot
Only to holy things : to prayer and praise
She gave herself, to fast and alms ; and yet,
Nun as she was, the scandal of the Court,
Sin against Arthur and the Table Round,
And the strange sound of an adulterous race
Across the iron grating of her cell
Beat, and she pray'd and fasted all the more.

" And he to whom she told her sins, or what
Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,
A man wellnigh a hundred winters old,
Spake often with her of the Holy Grail,
A legend handed down thro' five or six,
And each of these a hundred winters old,
From our Lord's time : and when King Arthur made
His Table Round, and all men's hearts became
Clean for a season, surely he had thought
That now the Holy Grail would come again ;
But sin broke out. Ah, Christ, that it would come,
And heal the world of all their wickedness !
' O Father ! ' asked the maiden, ' might it come
' To me by prayer and fasting ? ' ' Nay,' said he,
' I know not, for thy heart is pure as snow.'

And so she pray'd and fasted, till the sun
Shone, and the wind blew, thro' her, and I thought
She might have risen and floated when I saw her.

“For on a day she sent to speak with me.
And when she came to speak, behold her eyes
Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful,
Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful,
Beautiful in the light of holiness.
And ‘O my brother, Percivale,’ she said,
‘Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy Grail:
For, waked at dead of night, I heard a sound
As of a silver horn from o’er the hills
Blown, and I thought it is not Arthur’s use
To hunt by moonlight, and the slender sound
As from a distance beyond distance grew
Coming upon me, — O never harp nor horn,
Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch with hand,
Was like that music as it came; and then
Stream’d thro’ my cell a cold and silver beam,
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,
Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,
Till all the white walls of my cell were dyed
With rosy colors leaping on the wall;
And then the music faded, and the Grail
Passed, and the beam decay’d, and from the walls
The rosy quiverings died into the night.
So now the Holy Thing is here again
Among us, brother, fast thou too and pray,
And tell thy brother knights to fast and pray,
That so perchance the vision may be seen
By thee and those, and all the world be heal’d.’

“Then leaving the pale nun, I spake of this
To all men; and myself fasted and pray’d
Always, and many among us many a week
Fasted and pray’d even to the uttermost,
Expectant of the wonder that would be.

“And one there was among us, ever moved
Among us in white armor, Galahad.

'God make thee good as thou art beautiful,'
Said Arthur, when he dubb'd him knight; and none,
In so young youth, was ever made a knight
Till Galahad; and this Galahad, when he heard
My sister's vision, filled me with amaze;
His eyes became so like her own, they seem'd
Hers, and himself her brother more than I.

"Sister or brother none had he; but some
Call'd him a son of Lancelot, and some said
Begotten by enchantment, — chatterers, they,
Like birds of passage piping up and down
That gape for flies, — we know not whence they come;
For when was Lancelot wanderingly lewd?

"But she, the wan, sweet maiden, shore away
Clean from her forehead all that wealth of hair
Which made a silken mat-work for her feet;
And out of this she plaited broad and long
A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver thread,
And crimson in the belt a strange device,
A crimson grail within a silver beam;
And saw the bright boy-knight, and bound it on him,
Saying, 'My knight, my love, my knight of heaven.
O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine,
I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt.
Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen,
And break thro' all, till one will crown thee king
Far in the spiritual city:' and as she spake
She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
Thro' him, and made him hers, and laid her mind
On him, and he believed in her belief.

"Then came a year of miracle: O brother,
In our great hall there stood a vacant chair,
Fashion'd by Merlin ere he past away,
And carven with strange figures; and in and out
The figures, like a serpent, ran a scroll
Of letters in a tongue no man could read.
And Merlin call'd it 'The Siege perilous,'
Perilous for good and ill; 'for there,' he said,

‘No man could sit but he should lose himself:’
And once by misadvertence Merlin sat
In his own chair, and so was lost; but he,
Galahad, when he heard of Merlin’s doom,
Cried, ‘If I lose myself I save myself!’

“Then on a summer night it came to pass,
While the great banquet lay along the hall,
That Galahad would sit down in Merlin’s chair.

“And all at once, as there we sat, we heard
A cracking and a riving of the roofs,
And rending, and a blast, and overhead
Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
And in the blast there smote along the hall
A beam of light seven times more clear than day:
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
All over covered with a luminous cloud,
And none might see who bare it, and it past.
But every knight beheld his fellow’s face
As in a glory, and all the knights arose,
And staring each at other like dumb men
Stood, till I found a voice and sware a vow.

“I sware a vow before them all, that I,
Because I had not seen the Grail, would ride
A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,
Until I found and saw it, as the nun
My sister saw it; and Galahad sware the vow,
And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot’s cousin, sware,
And Lancelot sware, and many among the knights,
And Gawain sware, and louder than the rest.

“Then spake the monk Ambrosius, asking him,
‘What said the king? Did Arthur take the vow?’

“Nay, for, my lord, (said Percivale,) the king
Was not in Hall: for early that same day,
‘Scaped thro’ a cavern from a bandit hold,
An outraged maiden sprang into the hall
Crying on help: for all her shining hair

Was smeared with earth, and either milky arm
Red-rent with hooks of bramble, and all she wore
Torn as a sail, that leaves the rope, is torn
In tempest : so the king arose and went
To smoke the scandalous hive of those wild bees
That made such honey in his realm : howbeit
Some little of this marvel he too saw,
Returning o'er the plain that then began
To darken under Camelot ; whence the king
Look'd up, calling aloud, ' Lo there ! the roofs
Of our great Hall are rolled in thunder-smoke !
Pray Heaven they be not smitten by the bolt.'
For dear to Arthur was that hall of ours,
As having there so oft with all his knights
Feasted, and as the costliest under heaven.

“ O brother, had you known our mighty hall,
Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago !
For all the sacred mount of Camelot,
And all the dim rich city, roof by roof,
Tower after tower, spire beyond spire,
By grove, and garden-lawn, and rushing brook,
Climbs to the mighty hall that Merlin built.
And four great zones of sculpture, set betwixt
With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall :
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,
And in the second men are slaying beasts,
And on the third are warriors, perfect men,
And on the fourth are men with growing wings,
And over all one statue in the mould
Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,
And peak'd wings pointed to the Northern Star.
And eastward fronts the statue, and the crown
And both the wings are made of gold, and flame
At sunrise till the people in far fields,
Wasted so often by the heathen hordes,
Behold it, crying, ' We have still a king.'

“ And, brother, had you known our hall within,
Broader and higher than any in all the lands,
Where twelve great windows blazon Arthur's wars,

And all the light that falls upon the board
Streams thro' the twelve great battles of our king.
Nay, one there is, and at the eastern end,
Wealthy with wandering lines of mount and mere,
Where Arthur finds the brand Excalibur.
And also one to the west, and counter to it,
And blank : and who shall blazon it ? when and how ?
O then, perchance, when all our wars are done,
The brand Excalibur will be cast away.

“ So to this hall full quickly rode the king,
In horror lest the work by Merlin wrought,
Dreamlike, should on the sudden vanish, wrapt
In unremorseful folds of rolling fire.
And in he rode, and up I glanced, and saw
The golden dragon sparkling over all :
And many of those who burnt the hold, their arms
Hack'd, and their foreheads grimed with smoke, and sear'd
Follow'd, and in among bright faces, ours
Full of the vision, prest : and then the King
Spake to me, being nearest, ‘ Percivale,’
(Because the hall was all in tumult — some
Vowing, and some protesting), ‘ what is this ? ’

“ O brother, when I told him what had chanced,
My sister's vision, and the rest, his face
Darken'd, as I have seen it more than once,
When some brave deed seem'd to be done in vain,
Darken ; and ‘ Woe is me, my knights ! ’ he cried,
‘ Had I been here, ye had not sworn the vow.’
Bold was mine answer, ‘ Had thyself been here,
My king, thou wouldst have sworn.’ ‘ Yea, yea,’ said he,
‘ Art thou so bold and hast not seen the grail ? ’

“ ‘ Nay, Lord, I heard the sound, I saw the light,
But since I did not see the Holy Thing,
I swear a vow to follow it till I saw.’

“ Then when he asked us, knight by knight, if any
Had seen it, all their answers were as one,
‘ Nay, Lord, and therefore have we sworn our vows.

“ ‘Lo now,’ said Arthur, ‘have ye seen a cloud?
What go ye into the wilderness to see?’ ”

“ Then Galahad on the sudden, and in a voice
Shrilling along the hall to Arthur, call’d,
‘But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry —
O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me.’ ”

“ ‘Ah, Galahad, Galahad,’ said the King, ‘for such
As thou art is the vision, not for these.
Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign;
Holier is none, my Percivale, than she,—
A sign to maim this Order which I made.
But you, that follow but the leader’s bell,
(Brother, the king was hard upon his knights,)
‘Taliessin is our fullest throat of song,
And one hath sung and all the dumb will sing.
Lancelot is Lancelot, and hath overborne
Five knights at once, and every younger knight,
Unproven, holds himself as Lancelot,
Till, overborne by one, he learns, — and ye,
What are ye? Galahads, — no, nor Percivales’
(For thus it pleased the king to range me close
After Sir Galahad); ‘nay,’ said he, ‘but men
With strength and will to right the wrong’d, of power
To lay the sudden heads of violence flat,
Knights that in twelve great battles splash’d and dyed
The strong White Horse in his own heathen blood, —
But one hath seen, and all the blind will see.
Go, since your vows are sacred, being made, —
Yet, for ye know the cries of all my realm
Pass thro’ this hall, how often, O my knights,
Your places being vacant at my side,
The chance of noble deeds will come and go
Unchallenged, while you follow wandering fires
Lost in the quagmire: many of you, yea most,
Return no more: ye think I show myself
Too dark a prophet: come now, let us meet
The morrow morn once more in one full field
Of gracious pastime, that once more the king,

Before you leave him for this quest, may count
The yet unbroken strength of all his knights,
Rejoicing in that Order which he made.'

"So when the sun broke next from underground,
All the great table of our Arthur closed
And clash'd in such a tourney and so full,
So many lances broken, — never yet
Had Camelot seen the like since Arthur came.
And I myself and Galahad, for a strength
Was in us from the vision, overthrew
So many knights that all the people cried,
And almost burst the barriers in their heat,
Shouting 'Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale!'

"But when the next day brake from underground, —
O brother, had you known our Camelot,
Built by old kings, age after age, so old
The king himself had fears that it would fall,
So strange and rich, and dim; for where the roofs
Totter'd toward each other in the sky
Met foreheads all along the street of those
Who watch'd us pass; and lower, and where the long
Rich galleries, lady-laden, weigh'd the necks
Of dragons clinging to the crazy walls,
Thicker than drops from thunder showers of flowers
Fell, as we past; and men and boys astride
On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan,
At all the corners, named us each by name,
Calling 'God speed!' but in the street below
The knights and ladies wept, and rich and poor
Wept, and the king himself could hardly speak
For sorrow, and in the middle street the queen,
Who rode by Lancelot, wail'd and shriek'd aloud,
'This madness has come on us for our sins.'
And then we reached the weirdly sculptured gate,
Where Arthur's wars were render'd mystically,
And thence departed every one his way.

"And I was lifted up in heart, and thought
Of all my late-shown prowess in the lists,

How my strong lance had beaten down the knights,
So many and famous names ; and never yet
Had heaven appeared so blue, nor earth so green,
For all my blood danced in me, and I knew
That I should light upon the Holy Grail.

“ Thereafter, the dark warning of our king,
That most of us would follow wandering fires,
Came like a driving gloom across my mind.
Then every evil word I had spoken once,
And every evil thought I had thought of old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried, ‘ This quest is not for thee.’
And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,
And I was thirsty even unto death ;
And I, too, cried, ‘ This quest is not for thee.’

“ And on I rode, and when I thought my thirst
Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then a brook,
With one sharp rapid, where the crisping white
Played ever back upon the sloping wave,
And took both ear and eye ; and o’er the brook
Were apple-trees, and apples by the brook
Fallen, and on the lawns, ‘ I will rest here,’
I said, ‘ I am not worthy of the quest ;’
But even while I drank the brook, and ate
The goodly apples, all these things at once
Fell into dust, and I was left alone,
And thirsting, in a land of sand and thorns.

“ And then behold a woman at a door
Spinning, and fair the house whereby she sat ;
And kind the woman’s eyes and innocent,
And all her bearing gracious ; and she rose
Opening her arms to meet me, as who should say,
‘ Rest here ;’ but when I touched her, lo ! she too
Fell into dust and nothing, and the house
Became no better than a broken shed,
And in it a dead babe ; and also this
Fell into dust, and I was left alone.

“And on I rode, and greater was my thirst.
Then flash’d a yellow gleam across the world,
And where it smote the ploughshare in the field,
The ploughman left his ploughing, and fell down
Before it; where it glitter’d on her pail,
The milkmaid left her milking, and fell down
Before it, and I knew not why; but thought
‘The sun is rising,’ tho’ the sun had risen.
Then was I ware of one that on me moved
In golden armor, with a crown of gold
About a casque all jewels; and his horse
In golden armor jewell’d everywhere:
And on the splendor came, flashing me blind;
And seem’d to me the Lord of all the world,
Being so huge: but when I thought he meant
To crush me, moving on me, lo! he too
Opened his arms to embrace me as he came,
And up I went and touch’d him, and he too
Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And wearied in a land of sand and thorns.

“And on I rode and found a mighty hill,
And on the top a city wall’d: the spires
Prick’d with incredible pinnacles into heaven.
And by the gateway stirr’d a crowd; and these
Cried to me, climbing, ‘Welcome, Percivale!
Thou mightiest and thou purest among men!’
And glad was I and clomb, but found at top
No man, nor any voice; and thence I past
Far thr’ a ruinous city, and I saw
That man had once dwelt there; but there I found
Only one man of an exceeding age.
‘Where is that goodly company,’ said I,
‘That so cried upon me?’ and he had
Scarce any voice to answer, and yet gasp’d,
‘Whence and what art thou?’ and even as he spoke
Fell into dust, and disappear’d, and I
Was left alone once more, and cried, in grief,
‘Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself,
And touch it, it will crumble into dust.’

“ And thence I dropt into a lowly vale,
Low as the hill was high, and where the vale
Was lowest found a chapel, and thereby
A holy hermit in a hermitage,
To whom I told my phantoms, and he said :

“ ‘ O son, thou hast not true humility,
The highest virtue, mother of them all ;
For when the Lord of all things made Himself
Naked of glory for His mortal change,
“ Take thou my robe,” she said, “ for all is thine,”
And all her form shone forth with sudden light
So that the angels were amazed, and she
Follow’d him down, and like a flying star
Led on the gray-hair’d wisdom of the East ;
But her thou hast not known : for what is this
Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy sins ?
Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
As Galahad.’ As the hermit made an end,
In silver armor suddenly Galahad shone
Before us, and against the chapel door
Laid lance, and entered, and we knelt in prayer.
And there the hermit slaked my burning thirst ;
And at the sacring of the mass I saw
The holy elements alone ; but he
‘ Saw ye no more ? I, Galahad, saw the Grail,
The Holy Grail, descend upon the shrine :
I saw the fiery face as of a child
That smote itself into the bread, and went,
And hither am I come ; and never yet
Hath what thy sister taught me first to see,
This holy thing, fail’d from my side, nor come
Cover’d, but moving with me night and day,
Fainter by day, but always in the night
Blood-red, and sliding down the blacken’d marsh
Blood-red, and on the naked mountain top
Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below
Blood-red : and in the strength of this I rode
Shattering all evil customs everywhere,
And past thro’ Pagan realms, and made them mine,
And clash’d with Pagan hordes, and bore them down,

And broke thro' all, and in the strength of this
Come victor: but my time is hard at hand,
And hence I go; and one will crown me king
Far in the spiritual city; and come thou too,
For thou shalt see the vision when I go.'

"While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling on mine,
Drew me, with power upon me, till I grew
One with him, to believe as he believed.
Then when the day began to wane we went.

"Then rose a hill that none but man could climb,
Scarr'd with a hundred wintry watercourses, —
Storm at the top, and, when we gain'd it, storm
Round us and death; for every moment glanced
His silver arms and gloom'd: so quick and thick
The lightnings here and there to left and right
Struck, till the dry old trunks about us, dead,
Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,
Sprang into fire; and at the base we found
On either hand, as far as eye could see,
A great black swamp and of an evil smell,
Part black, part whiten'd with the bones of men,
Not to be crost save that some ancient king
Had built a way, where, linked with many a bridge,
A thousand piers ran into the Great Sea.
And Galahad fled along them bridge by bridge,
And every bridge as quickly as he crost
Sprang into fire and vanish'd, tho' I yearn'd
To follow; and thrice above him all the heavens
Open'd and blazed with thunder such as seem'd
Shoutings of all the sons of God: and first
At once I saw him far on the great sea,
In silver-shining armor starry-clear;
And o'er his head the holy vessel hung
Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud.
And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat,
If boat it were, — I saw not whence it came.
And when the heavens open'd and blazed again
Roaring, I saw him like a silver star, —
And had he set the sail, or had the boat

Become a living creature clad with wings?
And o'er his head the holy vessel hung
Redder than any rose, a joy to me,
For now I knew the veil had been withdrawn.
Then in a moment when they blazed again
Opening, I saw the least of little stars
Down on the waste, and straight beyond the star
I saw the spiritual city and all her spires
And gateways in a glory like one pearl,
No larger, tho' the goal of all the saints,
Strike from the sea; and from the star there shot
A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there
Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,
Which never eyes on earth again shall see.
Then fell the floods of heaven drowning the world.
And how my feet recross'd the deathful ridge
No memory in me lives; but that I touch'd
The chapel-doors at dawn, I know; and thence
Taking my war-horse from the holy man,
Glad that no phantom vexed me more, return'd
To whence I came, the gate of Arthur's wars."

"O brother," ask'd Ambrosius, "for in sooth
These ancient books — and they would win thee — teem,
Only I find not there this Holy Grail,
With miracles and marvels like to these,
Not all unlike; which oftentime I read,
Who read but on my breviary with ease,
Till my head swims; and then go forth and pass
Down to the little thorpe that lies so close,
And almost plaster'd like a martin's nest
To these old walls, — and mingle with our folk;
And knowing every honest face of theirs,
As well as ever shepherd knew his sheep,
And every homely secret in their hearts,
Delight myself with gossip and old wives,
And ills and aches, and teething, lyings-in,
And mirthful sayings, children of the place,
That have no meaning half a league away:
Or lulling random squabbles when they rise,
Chafferings and chatterings at the market-cross,

Rejoice, small man, in this small world of mine,
Yea, even in their hens and in their eggs :
O brother, saving this Sir Galahad
Came ye on none but phantoms in your quest,
No man, no woman ? ”

Then, Sir Percivale :

“ All men to one so bound by such a vow
And women were as phantoms. O my brother,
Why wilt thou shame me to confess to thee
How far I falter'd from my quest and vow ?
For after I had lain so many nights
A bedmate of the snail and eft and snake,
In grass and burdock, I was changed to wan
And meagre, and the vision had not come.
And then I chanced upon a goodly town
With one great dwelling in the middle of it ;
Whither I made, and there was I disarmed
By maidens each as fair as any flower :
But when they led me into hall, behold
The Princess of that castle was the one,
Brother, and that one only, who had ever
Made my heart leap ; for when I moved of old
A slender page about her father's hall,
And she a slender maiden, all my heart
Went after her with longing : yet we twain
Had never kiss'd a kiss, or vow'd a vow.
And now I came upon her once again,
And one had wedded her, and he was dead,
And all his land and wealth and state were hers.
And while I tarried, every day she set
A banquet richer than the day before
By me ; for all her longing and her will
Was toward me as of old ; till one fair morn,
I walking to and fro beside a stream
That flash'd across her orchard underneath
Her castle walls, she stole upon my walk,
And calling me the greatest of all knights,
Embraced me, and so kiss'd me the first time,
And gave herself and all her wealth to me.
Then I remember'd Arthur's warning word,

That most of us would follow wandering fires,
 And the quest faded in my heart. Anon,
 The heads of all her people drew to me,
 With supplication both of knees and tongue:
 'We have heard of thee: thou art our greatest knight:
 Our Lady says it, and we well believe:
 Wed thou our Lady, and rule over us,
 And thou shalt be as Arthur in our land.'
 O me, my brother! but one night my vow
 Burnt me within, so that I rose and fled,
 But wail'd and wept, and hated mine own self,
 And ev'n the Holy Quest, and all but her.
 Then after I was join'd with Galahad
 Cared not for her, nor anything upon earth."

Then said the monk, "Poor men, when yule is cold,
 Must be content to sit by little fires.
 And this am I, so that ye care for me
 Ever so little; yea, and blest be Heaven
 That brought thee here to this poor house of ours,
 Where all the brethren are so hard, to warm
 My cold heart with a friend: but O the pity
 To find thine own first love once more, — to hold,
 Hold her a wealthy bride within thine arms,
 Or all but hold, and then — cast her aside,
 Foregoing all her sweetness, like a weed.
 For we that want the warmth of double life,
 We that are plagued with dreams of something sweet
 Beyond all sweetness in a life so rich, —
 Ah, blessed Lord, I speak too earthly-wise,
 Seeing I never stray'd beyond the cell,
 But live like an old badger in his earth,
 With earth about him everywhere, despite
 All fast and penance. Saw ye none beside,
 None of your knights?"

"Yea so," said Percivale,
 "One night my pathway swerving east, I saw
 The pelican on the casque of our Sir Bors
 All in the middle of the rising moon:
 And toward him spurr'd and hail'd him, and he me,

And each made joy of either ; then he ask'd,
'Where is he? hast thou seen him — Lancelot?' 'Once,'
Said good Sir Bors, 'he dash'd across me — mad,
And maddening what he rode ; and when I cried,
"Ridest thou then so hotly on a quest
So holy?" Lancelot shouted, "Stay me not!
I have been the sluggard and I ride apace,
For now there is a lion in the way."
So vanish'd.'

"Then Sir Bors had ridden on
Softly and sorrowing for our Lancelot.
Because his former madness, once the talk
And scandal of our table, had return'd;
For Lancelot's kith and kin adore him so
That ill to him is ill to them ; to Bors
Beyond the rest : he well had been content
Not to have seen, so Lancelot might have seen,
The holy cup of healing ; and, indeed,
Being so clouded with his grief and love,
Small heart was his after the holy quest :
If God would send the vision, well : if not,
The Quest and he were in the hands of Heaven.

"And then, with small adventure met, Sir Bors
Down to the last tongue-tip of Lyonesse rode,
And found a people there among their crags,
Our race and blood, a remnant that were left
Paynim amid their circles, and the stones
They pitch up straight to heaven : and their wise men
Were strong in that old magic which can trace
The wandering of the stars, and acoff'd at him,
And this high quest as at a simple thing :
Told him he follow'd — almost Arthur's words —
A mocking fire : 'what other fire than he,
Whereby the blood beats, and the blossom blows,
And the sea rolls, and all the world is warm'd?'
And when his answer chafed them, the rough crowd,
Hearing he had a difference with their priests,
Seized him, and bound and plunged him into a cell
Of great piled stones ; and lying bounden there

In darkness thro' innumerable hours
 He heard the hollow-ringing heavens sweep
 Over him, till by miracle — what else? —
 Heavy as it was, a great stone slipt and fell,
 Such as no wind could move : and thro' the gap
 Glimmer'd the streaming scud : then came a night
 Still as the day was loud ; and thro' the gap
 The seven clear stars of Arthur's Table Round, —
 For, brother, so one night, because they roll
 Thro' such a round in heaven, we named the stars,
 Rejoicing in ourselves and in our king, —
 And these like bright eyes of familiar friends
 In on him shone, ' And then to me, to me,'
 Said good Sir Bors, ' beyond all hopes of mine,
 Who scarce had pray'd or ask'd it for myself, —
 Across the seven clear stars, — O grace to me! —
 In color like the fingers of a hand
 Before a burning taper, the sweet Grail
 Glided and past, and close upon it peal'd
 A sharp quick thunder : ' afterwards a maid
 Who kept our holy faith among her kin
 In secret, entering, loosed and let him go."

To whom the monk : " And I remember now
 That pelican on the casque : Sir Bors it was
 Who spake so low and sadly at our board ;
 And mighty reverent at our grace was he :
 A square-set man and honest ; and his eyes,
 An out-door sign of all the warmth within,
 Smiled with his lips, — a smile beneath a cloud,
 But Heaven had meant it for a sunny one :
 Ay, ay, Sir Bors, who else ? but when ye reach'd
 The city, found ye all your knights return'd,
 Or was there sooth in Arthur's prophecy ?
 Tell me, and what said each, and what the king."

Then answer'd Percivale, " And that can I,
 Brother, and truly ; since the living words
 Of so great men as Lancelot and our king
 Pass not from door to door and out again,
 But sit within the house. O, when we reach'd

The city, our horses stumbling as they trode
On heaps of ruin, hornless unicorns,
Crack'd basilisks, and splinter'd cockatrices,
And shatter'd talbots, which had left the stones
Raw, that they fell from, brought us to the hall.

“And there sat Arthur on the dais-throne,
And those that had gone out upon the Quest, —
Wasted and worn, and but a tithe of them, —
And those that had not, stood before the king.
Who, when he saw me, rose, and bade me hail,
Saying, ‘A welfare in thine eye reproves
Our fear of some disastrous chance for thee
On hill, or plain, at sea, or flooding ford.
So fierce a gale made havoc here of late
Among the strange devices of our kings;
Yea, shook this newer, stronger hall of ours,
And from the statue Merlin moulded for us
Half wrench'd a golden wing; but now — the quest,
This vision — hast thou seen the holy cup,
That Joseph brought of old to Glastonbury?’

“So when I told him all thyself hast heard,
Ambrosius, and my fresh but fixt resolve
To pass away into the quiet life,
He answer'd not, but, sharply turning, ask'd
Of Gawain, ‘Gawain, was this quest for thee?’

“‘Nay, lord,’ said Gawain, ‘not for such as I.
Therefore I communed with a saintly man,
Who made me sure the quest was not for me.
For I was much awearied of the quest.
But found a silk pavilion in a field,
And merry maidens in it; and then this gale
Tore my pavilion from the tenting-pin,
And blew my merry maidens all about
With all discomfort; yea, and but for this
My twelvemonth and a day were pleasant to me.’

“He ceased; and Arthur turn'd to whom at first
He saw not, for Sir Bors, on entering, push'd

Athwart the throng to Lancelot, caught his hand,
 Held it, and there, half hidden by him, stood,
 Until the king espied him, saying to him, '
 'Hail, Bors! if ever loyal man and true
 Could see it, thou hast seen the Grail,' and Bors,
 'Ask me not, for I may not speak of it,
 I saw it:' and the tears were in his eyes.

"Then there remained but Lancelot, for the rest
 Spake but of sundry perils in the storm,
 Perhaps, like him of Cana in Holy Writ,
 Our Arthur kept his best until the last.
 'Thou, too, my Lancelot,' ask'd the King, 'my friend,
 Our mightiest, hath this quest avail'd for thee?'

"'Our mightiest!' answer'd Lancelot, with a groan,
 'O king!' and when he paused, methought I spied
 A dying fire of madness in his eyes,
 'O king, my friend, if friend of thine I be,
 Happier are those that welter in their sin,
 Swine in the mud, that cannot see for slime,
 Slime of the ditch;—but in me lived a sin
 So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,
 Noble, and knightly in me twined and clung
 Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower
 And poisonous grew together, each as each,
 Not to be pluck'd asunder; and when thy knights
 Sware, I swear with them only in the hope
 That could I touch or see the Holy Grail
 They might be pluck'd asunder: then I spake
 To one most holy saint, who wept and said
 That save they could be pluck'd asunder all
 My quest were but in vain; to whom I vow'd
 That I would work according as he will'd.
 And forth I went, and while I yearn'd and strove
 To tear the twain asunder in my heart,
 My madness came upon me as of old
 And whipt me into waste fields far away.
 There was I beaten down by little men,
 Mean knights, to whom the moving of my sword
 And shadow of my spear had been enow

To scare them from me once ; and then I came
All in my folly to the naked shore,
Wide flats where nothing but coarse grasses grew,
But such a blast, my king, began to blow,
So loud a blast along the shore and sea,
Ye could not hear the waters for the blast,
Tho' heapt in mounds and ridges all the sea
Drove like a cataract, and all the sand
Swept like a river, and the clouded heavens
Were shaken with the motion and the sound.
And blackening in the sea-foam sway'd a boat
Half-swallowed in it, anchor'd with a chain ;
And in my madness to myself I said,
" I will embark and I will lose myself,
And in the great sea wash away my sin."
I burst the chain, I sprang into the boat.
Seven days I drove along the dreary deep,
And with me drove the moon and all the stars ;
And the wind fell, and on the seventh night
I heard the shingle grinding in the surge,
And felt the boat shock earth, and looking up
Beheld the enchanted towers of Carbonek.
A castle like a rock upon a rock,
With chasm-like portals open to the sea,
And steps that met the breaker : there was none
Stood near it but a lion on each side,
That kept the entry, and the moon was full.
Then from the boat I leapt, and up the stairs.
There drew my sword. With sudden-flaring manes
Those two great beasts rose upright like a man,
Each gript a shoulder, and I stood between,
And, when I would have smitten them, heard a voice,
" Doubt not, go forward ; if thou doubt, the beasts
Will tear thee piecemeal ; " then with violence
The sword was dash'd from out my hand and fell.
And up into the sounding hall I past
But nothing in the sounding hall I saw,
No bench nor table, painting on the wall,
Or shield of knight ; only the rounded moon
Thro' the tall oriel on the rolling sea.
But always in the quiet house I heard,

Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,
 A sweet voice singing in the topmost tower
 To the eastward : up I climb'd a thousand steps
 With pain : as in a dream I seem'd to climb
 Forever : at the last I reach'd a door,
 A light was in the crannies, and I heard
 "Glory and joy and honor to our Lord
 And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail."
 Then in my madness I essay'd the door :
 It gave, and thro' a stormy glare, a heat
 As from a seven-times-heated furnace, I,
 Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was,
 With such a fierceness that I swoon'd away.
 O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
 All pall'd in crimson samite, and around
 Great angels, awful shapes, and wings and eyes.
 And but for all my madness and my sin,
 And then my swooning, I had sworn I saw
 That which I saw ; but what I saw was veil'd
 And cover'd ; and this quest was not for me.'

"So speaking, and here ceasing, Lancelot left
 The hall long silent, till Sir Gawain — nay,
 Brother, I need not tell thee foolish words, —
 A reckless and irreverent knight was he,
 Now bolden'd by the silence of his king, —
 Well, I will tell thee : 'O king, my liege,' he said,
 'Hath Gawain fail'd in any quest of thine ?
 When have I stinted stroke in foughten field ?
 But as for thine, my good friend, Percivale,
 Thy holy nun and thou have driven men mad,
 Yea, made our mightiest madder than our least.
 But by mine eyes and by mine ears I swear,
 I will be deafer than the blue-eyed cat,
 And thrice as blind as any noonday owl,
 To holy virgins in their ecstasies,
 Henceforward.'

"Deafer,' said the blameless King,
 'Gawain, and blinder unto holy things
 Hope not to make thyself by idle vows,

Being too blind to have desire to see.
But if indeed there came a sign from heaven,
Blessed are Bors, Lancelot, and Percivale,
For these have seen according to their sight.
For every fiery prophet in old times,
And all the sacred madness of the bard,
When God made music thro' them, could but speak
His music by the framework and the chord,
And as ye saw it ye have spoken truth.

“ ‘Nay — but thou errest, Lancelot : never yet
Could all of true and noble in knight and man
Twine round one sin, whatever it might be,
With such a closeness, but apart there grew,
Save that he were the swine thou spakest of,
Some root of knighthood and pure nobleness ;
Whereto see thou, that it may bear its flower.

“ ‘And spake I not too truly, O my knights ?
Was I too dark a prophet when I said
To those who went upon the Holy Quest
That most of them would follow wandering fires,
Lost in the quagmire, — lost to me and gone,
And left me gazing at a barren board,
And a lean order — scarce return'd a tithe —
And out of those to whom the vision came
My greatest hardly will believe he saw ;
Another hath beheld it afar off,
And leaving human wrongs to right themselves,
Cares but to pass into the silent life.
And one hath had the vision face to face,
And now his chair desires him here in vain,
However they may crown him elsewhere.

“ ‘And some among you held that if the king
Had seen the sight he would have sworn the vow
Not easily, seeing that the king must guard
That which he rules, and is but as the hind
To whom a space of land is given to plough,
Who may not wander from the allotted field
Before his work be done ; but, being done,

Let visions of the night or of the day
Come, as they will; and many a time they come,
Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,
This air that smites his forehead is not air
But vision — yea, his very hand and foot —
In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
Who rose again: ye have seen what ye have seen.'

"So spake the king: I knew not all he meant."

PELLEAS AND ETTARRE.

KING ARTHUR made new knights to fill the gap
Left by the Holy Quest; and as he sat
In hall at old Caerleon, the high doors
Were softly sunder'd, and thro' these a youth,
Pelleas, and the sweet smell of the fields
Past, and the sunshine came along with him.

“Make me thy knight, because I know, Sir King,
All that belongs to knighthood, and I love,”
Such was his cry; for having heard the king
Had let proclaim a tournament — the prize
A golden circlet and a knightly sword,
Full fain had Pelleas for his lady won
The golden circlet, for himself the sword:
And there were those who knew him near the king,
And promised for him: and Arthur made him knight.

And this new knight, Sir Pelleas of the isles —
But lately come to his inheritance,
And lord of many a barren isle was he —
Riding at noon, a day or twain before,
Across the forest call'd of Dean, to find
Caerleon and the king, had felt the sun

Beat like a strong knight on his helm, and reel'd
Almost to falling from his horse ; but saw
Near him a mound of even-sloping side,
Whereon a hundred stately beeches grew,
And here and there great hollies under them.
But for a mile all round was open space,
And fern and heath : and slowly Pelleas drew
To that dim day, then binding his good horse
To a tree, cast himself down ; and as he lay
At random looking over the brown earth
Thro' that green-glooming twilight of the grove,
It seem'd to Pelleas that the fern without
Burnt as a living fire of emeralds,
So that his eyes were dazzled looking at it.
Then o'er it crossed the dimness of a cloud
Floating, and once the shadow of a bird
Flying, and then a fawn ; and his eyes closed.
And since he loved all maidens, but no maid
In special, half awake he whisper'd, " Where?
O where ? I love thee, tho' I know thee not.
For fair thou art and pure as Guinevere,
And I will make thee with my spear and sword
As famous — O my queen, my Guinevere,
For I will be thine Arthur when we meet."

Suddenly waken'd with a sound of talk
And laughter at the limit of the wood,
And glancing thro' the hoary boles, he saw,
Strange as to some old prophet might have seem'd
A vision hovering on a sea of fire,
Damsels in divers colors like the cloud
Of sunset and sunrise, and all of them
On horses, and the horses richly trapt
Breast-high in that bright line of bracken stood :
And all the damsels talk'd confusedly,
And one was pointing this way, and one that,
Because the way was lost.

And Pelleas rose,
And loosed his horse, and led him to the light.
There she that seem'd the chief among them, said,

"In happy time behold our pilot-star.
Youth, we are damsels-errant, and we ride,
Arm'd as ye see, to tilt against the knights
There at Caerleon, but have lost our way:
To right? to left? straight forward? back again?
Which? tell us quickly."

And Pelleas gazing thought,
"Is Guinevere herself so beautiful?"
For large her violet eyes look'd, and her bloom
A rosy dawn kindled in stainless heavens,
And round her limbs, mature in womanhood,
And slender was her hand and small her shape,
And but for those large eyes, the haunts of scorn,
She might have seem'd a toy to trifle with,
And pass and care no more. But while he gazed
The beauty of her flesh abashed the boy,
As tho' it were the beauty of her soul:
For as the base man, judging of the good,
Puts his own baseness in him by default
Of will and nature, so did Pelleas lend
All the young beauty of his own soul to hers,
Believing her; and when she spake to him,
Stammer'd, and could not make her a reply.
For out of the waste islands had he come,
Where saving his own sisters he had known
Scarce any but the women of his isles,
Rough wives, that laugh'd and scream'd against the gulls,
Makers of nets, and living from the sea.

Then with a slow smile turn'd the lady round
And look'd upon her people; and as when
A stone is flung into some sleeping tarn,
The circle widens till it lip the marge,
Spread the slow smile thro' all her company.
Three knights were thereamong; and they too smiled,
Scorning him; for the lady was Ettarre,
And she was a great lady in her land.

Again she said, "O wild and of the woods,
Knowest thou not the fashion of our speech?"

Or have the Heavens but given thee a fair face,
Lacking a tongue ? ”

“ O damsel,” answer’d he,
“ I woke from dreams ; and coming out of gloom
Was dazzled by the sudden light, and crave
Pardon : but will ye to Caerleon ? I
Go likewise : shall I lead you to the King ? ”
“ Lead then,” she said ; and thro’ the woods they went.
And while they rode, the meaning in his eyes,
His tenderness of manner, and chaste awe,
His broken utterances and bashfulness,
Were all a burden to her, and in her heart
She mutter’d, “ I have lighted on a fool,
Raw, yet so stale ! ” But since her mind was bent
On hearing, after trumpet blown, her name
And title, “ Queen of Beauty,” in the lists
Cried — and beholding him so strong, she thought
That peradventure he will fight for me,
And win the circlet : therefore flatter’d him,
Being so gracious, that he wellnigh deem’d
His wish by hers was echo’d ; and her knights
And all her damsels too were gracious to him,
For she was a great lady.

And when they reach’d
Caerleon, ere they past to lodging, she,
Taking his hand, “ O the strong hand,” she said,
“ See ! look at mine ! but wilt thou fight for me,
And win me this fine circlet, Pelleas,
That I may love thee ? ”

Then his helpless heart
Leapt, and he cried, “ Ay ! wilt thou if I win ? ”
“ Ay, that will I,” she answer’d, and she laugh’d,
And straightly nipt the hand, and flung it from her ;
Then glanced askew at those three knights of hers,
Till all her ladies laugh’d along with her.

“ O happy world,” thought Pelleas, “ all, meseems,
Are happy ; I the happiest of them all.”

Nor slept that night for pleasure in his blood,
And green wood-ways, and eyes among the leaves ;
Then being on the morrow knighted, sware
To love one only. And as he came away,
The men who met him rounded on their heels
And wonder'd after him, because his face
Shone like the countenance of a priest of old
Against the flame about a sacrifice
Kindled by fire from heaven : so glad was he.

Then Arthur made vast banquets, and strange knights
From the four winds came in : and each one sat,
Tho' served with choice from air, land, stream, and sea,
Oft in mid-banquet measuring with his eyes
His neighbor's make and might : and Pelleas look'd
Noble among the noble, for he dream'd
His lady loved him, and he knew himself
Loved of the King : and him his new-made knight
Worshipt, whose lightest whisper moved him more
Than all the ranged reasons of the world.

Then blush'd and brake the morning of the jousts,
And this was call'd "The Tournament of Youth :"
For Arthur, loving his young knight, withheld
His older and his mightier from the lists,
That Pelleas might obtain his lady's love,
According to her promise, and remain
Lord of the tourney. And Arthur had the jousts
Down in the flat field by the shore of Usk
Holden : the gilded parapets were crown'd
With faces, and the great tower filled with eyes
Up to the summit, and the trumpets blew.
There all day long Sir Pelleas kept the field
With honor : so by that strong hand of his
The sword and golden circlet were achieved.

Then rang the shout his lady loved : the heat
Of pride and glory fired her face ; her eye
Sparkled ; she caught the circlet from his lance,
And there before the people crown'd herself :
So for the last time she was gracious to him.

Then at Caerleon for a space — her look
Bright for all others, cloudier on her knight —
Linger'd Ettarre : and seeing Pelleas droop,
Said Guinevere, " We marvel at thee much,
O damsel, wearing this unsunny face
To him who won thee glory ! " And she said,
" Had ye not held your Lancelot in your bower,
My Queen, he had not won." Whereat the Queen,
As one whose foot is bitten by an ant,
Glanced down upon her, turn'd and went her way.

But after, when her damsels, and herself,
And those three knights all set their faces home,
Sir Pelleas follow'd. She that saw him cried,
" Damsels — and yet I should be shamed to say it —
I cannot bide Sir Baby. Keep him back
Among yourselves. Would rather that we had
Some rough old knight who knew the worldly way,
Albeit grizzlier than a bear, to ride
And jest with : take him to you, keep him off,
And pamper him with papmeat, if ye will,
Old milky fables of the wolf and sheep,
Such as the wholesome mothers tell their boys.
Nay, should ye try him with a merry one
To find his mettle, good : and if he fly us,
Small matter ! let him." This her damsels heard,
And mindful of her small and cruel hand,
They, closing round him thro' the journey home,
Acted her hest, and always from her side
Restrain'd him with all manner of device,
So that he could not come to speech with her.
And when she gain'd her castle, upsprang the bridge,
Down rang the grate of iron thro' the groove,
And he was left alone in open field.

" These be the ways of ladies," Pelleas thought,
" To those who love them, trials of our faith.
Yea, let her prove me to the uttermost,
For loyal to the uttermost am I."
So made his moan ; and, darkness falling, sought
A priory not far off, there lodged, but rose

With morning every day, and, moist or dry,
Full-arm'd upon his charger all-day long
Sat by the walls, and no one open'd to him.

And this persistence turn'd her scorn to wrath.
Then calling her three knights, she charged them, "Out!
And drive him from the walls." And out they came,
But Pelleas overthrew them as they dash'd
Against him one by one; and these return'd,
But still he kept his watch beneath the wall.

Thereon her wrath became a hate; and once,
A week beyond, while walking on the walls
With her three knights, she pointed downward, "Look,
He haunts me — I cannot breathe — besieges me;
Down! strike him! put my hate into your strokes,
And drive him from my walls." And down they went,
And Pelleas overthrew them one by one;
And from the tower above him cried Ettarre,
"Bind him, and bring him in."

He heard her voice;
Then let the strong hand, which had overthrown
Her minion-knights, by those he overthrew
Be bounden straight, and so they brought him in.

Then when he came before Ettarre, the sight
Of her rich beauty made him at one glance
More bondsman in his heart than in his bonds.
Yet with good cheer he spake, "Behold me, Lady,
A prisoner, and the vassal of thy will;
And if thou keep me in thy donjon here,
Content am I so that I see thy face
But once a day: for I have sworn my vows,
And thou hast given thy promise, and I know
That all these pains are trials of my faith,
And that thyself, when thou hast seen me strain'd
And sifted to the utmost, wilt at length
Yield me thy love and know me for thy knight."

Then she began to rail so bitterly,
With all her damsels, he was stricken mute;

But when she mock'd his vows and the great King,
Lighted on words : " For pity of thine own self,
Peace, Lady, peace : is he not thine and mine ? "
" Thou fool," she said, " I never heard his voice
But long'd to break away. Unbind him now,
And thrust him out of doors ; for save he be
Fool to the midmost marrow of his bones,
He will return no more." And those, her three,
Laugh'd, and unbound, and thrust him from the gate.

And after this, a week beyond, again
She call'd them, saying, " There he watches yet,
There like a dog before his master's door !
Kick'd, he returns : do ye not hate him, ye ?
Ye know yourselves : how can ye bide at peace,
Affronted with his fulsome innocence ?
Are ye but creatures of the board and bed,
No men to strike ? Fall on him all at once,
And if ye slay him I reckon not : if ye fail,
Give ye the slave mine order to be bound,
Bind him as heretofore, and bring him in :
It may be ye shall slay him in his bonds."

She spake ; and at her will they couch'd their spears,
Three against one : and Gawain passing by,
Bound upon solitary adventure, saw
Low down beneath the shadow of those towers
A villany, three to one : and thro' his heart
The fire of honor and all noble deeds
Flash'd, and he call'd, " I strike upon thy side —
The caitiffs ! " " Nay," said Pelleas, " but forbear ;
He needs no aid who doth his lady's will."

So Gawain, looking at the villany done,
Forbore, but in his heat and eagerness
Trembled and quiver'd, as the dog, withheld
A moment from the vermin that he sees
Before him, shivers, ere he springs and kills.

And Pelleas overthrew them, one to three ;
And they rose up, and bound, and brought him in.

Then first her anger, leaving Pelleas, burn'd
Full on her knights in many an evil name
Of craven, weakling, and thrice-beaten hound :
“ Yet, take him, ye that scarce are fit to touch,
Ear less to bind, your victor, and thrust him out,
And let who will release him from his bonds.
And if he comes again ” — there she brake short ;
And Pelleas answer'd, “ Lady, for indeed
I loved you and I deem'd you beautiful,
I cannot brook to see your beauty marr'd
Thro' evil spite : and if ye love me not,
I cannot bear to dream you so forsworn :
I had liefer ye were worthy of my love,
Than to be loved again of you — farewell ;
And tho' ye kill my hope, not yet my love,
Vex not yourself : ye will not see me more.”

While thus he spake, she gazed upon the man
Of princely bearing, tho' in bonds, and thought,
“ Why have I push'd him from me ? this man loves,
If love there be : yet him I loved not. Why ?
I deem'd him fool ? yea, so ? or that in him
A something — was it nobler than myself ? —
Seem'd my reproach ? He is not of my kind.
He could not love me, did he know me well.
Nay, let him go — and quickly.” And her knights
Laugh'd not, but thrust him bounden out of door.

Forth sprang Gawain, and loosed him from his bonds,
And flung them o'er the walls ; and afterward,
Shaking his hands, as from a lazar's rag,
“ Faith of my body,” he said, “ and art thou not —
Yea thou art he, whom late our Arthur made
Knight of his table ; yea and he that won
The circlet ? wherefore hast thou so defamed
Thy brotherhood in me and all the rest,
As let these caitiffs on thee work their will ? ”

And Pelleas answer'd, “ O, their wills are hers
For whom I won the circlet ; and mine, hers,
Thus to be bounden, so to see her face,

Marr'd tho' it be with spite and mockery now,
Other than when I found her in the woods ;
And tho' she hath me bounden but in spite,
And all to flout me, when they bring me in ;
Let me be bounden, I shall see her face ;
Else must I die thro' mine unhappiness."

And Gawain answer'd kindly tho' in scorn,
" Why, let my lady bind me if she will,
And let my lady beat me if she will :
But an she send her delegate to thrall
These fighting hands of mine — Christ kill me then
But I will slice him handless by the wrist,
And let my lady sear the stump for him,
Howl as he may. But hold me for your friend :
Come, ye know nothing : here I pledge my troth,
Yea, by the honor of the Table Round,
I will be leal to thee and work thy work,
And tame thy jailing princess to thine hand.
Lend me thine horse and arms, and I will say
That I have slain thee. She will let me in
To hear the manner of thy fight and fall ;
Then, when I come within her counsels, then
From prime to vespers will I chant thy praise
As prowtest knight and truest lover, more
Than any have sung thee living, till she long
To have thee back in lusty life again,
Not to be bound, save by white bonds and warm,
Dearer than freedom. Wherefore now thy horse
And armor : let me go : be comforted :
Give me three days to melt her fancy, and hope
The third night hence will bring thee news of gold."

Then Pelleas lent his horse and all his arms,
Saving the goodly sword, his prize, and took
Gawain's, and said, " Betray me not, but help —
Art thou not he whom men call light-of-love ? "

" Ay," said Gawain, " for women be so light."
Then bounded forward to the castle walls,
And raised a bugle hanging from his neck,

And winded it, and that so musically
That all the old echoes hidden in the wall
Rang out like hollow woods at huntingtide.

Up ran a score of damsels to the tower ;
"Avaunt," they cried, "our lady loves thee not."
But Gawain lifting up his visor said,
"Gawain am I, Gawain of Arthur's court,
And I have slain this Pelleas whom ye hate :
Behold his horse and armor. Open gate,
And I will make you merry."

And down they ran,
Her damsels, crying to their lady, "Lo !
Pelleas is dead — he told us — he that hath
His horse and armor : will ye let him in ?
He slew him ! Gawain, Gawain of the court,
Sir Gawain — there he waits below the wall,
Blowing his bugle as who should say him nay."

And so, leave given, straight on thro' open door
Rode Gawain, whom she greeted courteously.
"Dead, is it so ?" she ask'd. "Ay, ay," said he,
"And oft in dying cried upon your name."
"Pity on him," she answer'd, "a good knight,
But never let me bide one hour at peace."
"Ay," thought Gawain, "and ye be fair enow :
But I to your dead man have given my troth,
That whom ye loathe him will I make you love."

So those three days, aimless about the land,
Lost in a doubt, Pelleas wandering
Waited, until the third night brought a moon
With promise of large light on woods and ways.

The night was hot : he could not rest, but rode
Ere midnight to her walls, and bound his horse
Hard by the gates. Wide open were the gates,
And no watch kept ; and in thro' these he past,
And heard but his own steps, and his own heart
Beating, for nothing moved but his own self,
And his own shadow. Then he crost the court,

And saw the postern portal also wide
Yawning ; and up a slope of garden, all
Of roses white and red, and wild ones mixt
And overgrowing them, went on, and found,
Here too, all hush'd below the mellow moon,
Save that one rivulet from a tiny caye
Came lightening downward, and so spilt itself
Among the roses, and was lost again.

Then was he ware that white pavilions rose,
Three from the bushes, gilden-peakt : in one,
Red after revel, droned her lurdan knights
Slumbering, and their three squires across their feet :
In one, their malice on the placid lip
Froz'n by sweet sleep, four of her damsels lay :
And in the third, the circlet of the jousts
Bound on her brow, were Gawain and Ettarre.

Back, as a hand that pushes thro' the leaf
To find a nest and feels a snake, he drew :
Back, as a coward slinks from what he fears
To cope with, or a traitor proven, or hound
Beaten, did Pelleas in an utter shame
Creep with his shadow thro' the court again,
Fingering at his sword-handle until he stood
There on the castle-bridge once more, and thought,
"I will go back, and slay them where they lie."

And so went back and seeing them yet in sleep
Said, "Ye, that so dishallow the holy sleep,
Your sleep is death," and drew the sword, and thought,
"What ! slay a sleeping knight ? the King hath bound
And sworn me to this brotherhood ;" again,
"Alas that ever a knight should be so false."
Then turn'd, and so return'd, and groaning laid
The naked sword athwart their naked throats,
There left it, and them sleeping ; and she lay,
The circlet of the tourney round her brows,
And the sword of the tourney across her throat.

And forth he past, and mounting on his horse
Stared at her towers that, larger than themselves

In their own darkness, throng'd into the moon.
Then crush'd the saddle with his thighs, and clench'd
His hands, and madden'd with himself and moan'd :

“ Would they have risen against me in their blood
At the last day? I might have answer'd them
Even before high God. O towers so strong,
So solid, would that even while I gaze
The crack of earthquake, shivering to your base
Split you, and Hell burst up your harlot roofs
Bellowing, and charr'd you thro' and thro' within,
Black as the harlot's heart — hollow as a skull !
Let the fierce east scream thro' your eyelet-holes,
And whirl the dust of harlots round and round
In dung and nettles ! hiss, snake — I saw him there —
Let the fox bark, let the wolf yell. Who yells
Here in the still sweet summer night, but I —
I, the poor Pelleas whom she call'd her fool ?
Fool, beast — he, she, or I ? myself most fool ;
Beast too, as lacking human wit — disgraced,
Dishonor'd all for trial of true love —
Love ? — we be all alike : only the king
Hath made us fools and liars. O noble vows !
O great and sane and simple race of brutes
That own no lust because they have no law !
For why should I have loved her to my shame ?
I loathe her, as I loved her to my shame.
I never loved her, I but lusted for her —
Away — ”

He dash'd the rowel into his horse,
And bounded forth and vanish'd thro' the night.

Then she, that felt the cold touch on her throat,
Awaking knew the sword, and turn'd herself
To Gawain : “ Liar, for thou hast not slain
This Pelleas ! here he stood and might have slain
Me and thyself.” And he that tells the tale
Says that her ever-veering fancy turn'd
To Pelleas, as the one true knight on earth,
And only lover ; and thro' her love her life
Wasted and pined, desiring him in vain.

But he by wild and way, for half the night,
And over hard and soft, striking the sod
From out the soft, the spark from off the hard,
Rode till the star above the wakening sun,
Beside that tower where Percivale was cowl'd,
Glanced from the rosy forehead of the dawn.
For so the words were flash'd into his heart
He knew not whence or wherefore : " O sweet star,
Pure on the virgin forehead of the dawn."
And there he would have wept, but felt his eyes
Harder and drier than a fountain bed
In summer : thither came the village girls
And linger'd talking, and they come no more
Till the sweet heavens have fill'd it from the heights
Again with living waters in the change
Of seasons : hard his eyes ; harder his heart
Seem'd ; but so weary were his limbs, that he,
Gasping, " Of Arthur's hall am I, but here,
Here let me rest and die," cast himself down,
And gulf'd his griefs in inmost sleep ; so lay,
Till shaken by a dream, that Gawain fired
The hall of Merlin, and the morning star
Reel'd in the smoke, brake into flame, and fell.

He woke, and being ware of some one nigh,
Sent hands upon him, as to tear him, crying,
" False ! and I held thee pure as Guinevere."

But Percivale stood near him and replied,
" Am I but false as Guinevere is pure ?
Or art thou mazed with dreams ? or being one
Of our free-spoken Table hast not heard
That Lancelot " — there he check'd himself and paused.

Then fared it with Sir Pelleas as with one
Who gets a wound in battle, and the sword
That made it plunges thro' the wound again,
And pricks it deeper : and he shrank and wail'd,
" Is the Queen false ? " and Percivale was mute.
" Have any of our Round Table held their vows ? "
And Percivale made answer not a word.

“Is the king true?” “The king!” said Percivale.
 “Why then let men couple at once with wolves.
 What! art thou mad?”

But Pelleas, leaping up,
 Ran thro' the doors and vaulted on his horse
 And fled: small pity upon his horse had he,
 Or on himself, or any, and when he met
 A cripple, one that held a hand for alms —
 Hunch'd as he was, and like an old dwarf-elm
 That turns its back on the salt blast, the boy
 Paused not but overrode him, shouting, “False,
 And false with Gawain!” and so left him bruised
 And batter'd, and fled on, and hill and wood
 Went ever streaming by him till the gloom,
 That follows on the turning of the world,
 Darkened the common path: he twitch'd the reins,
 And made his beast that better knew it, swerve
 Now off it and now on; but when he saw
 High up in heaven the hall that Merlin built,
 Blackening against the dead-green stripes of even,
 “Black nest of rats,” he groan'd, “ye build too high.”

Not long thereafter from the city gates
 Issued Sir Lancelot riding airily,
 Warm with a gracious parting from the Queen,
 Peace at his heart, and gazing at a star
 And marvelling what it was: on whom the boy,
 Across the silent seeded meadow-grass
 Borne, clash'd: and Lancelot, saying, “What name hast
 thou

That ridest here so blindly and so hard?”
 “I have no name,” he shouted, “a scourge am I,
 To lash the treasons of the Table Round.”
 “Yea, but thy name?” “I have many names,” he cried:
 “I am wrath and shame and hate and evil fame,
 And like a poisonous wind I pass to blast
 And blaze the crime of Lancelot and the Queen.”
 “First over me,” said Lancelot, “shalt thou pass.”
 “Fight therefore,” yell'd the other, and either knight
 Drew back a space, and when they closed, at once

The weary steed of Pelleas floundering flung
His rider, who called out from the dark field,
"Thou art false as Hell: slay me: I have no sword."
Then Lancelot, "Yea, between thy lips — and sharp;
But here will I disedge it by thy death."
"Slay then," he shriek'd, "my will is to be slain."
And Lancelot, with his heel upon the fall'n,
Rolling his eyes, a moment stood, then spake:
"Rise, weakling; I am Lancelot; say thy say."

And Lancelot slowly rode his war-horse back
To Camelot, and Sir Pelleas in brief while
Caught his unbroken limbs from the dark field,
And followed to the city. It chanced that both
Brake into hall together, worn and pale.
There with her knights and dames was Guinevere.
Full wonderingly she gazed on Lancelot
So soon return'd, and then on Pelleas, him
Who had not greeted her, but cast himself
Down on a bench, hard-breathing. "Have ye fought?"
She ask'd of Lancelot. "Ay, my Queen," he said.
"And thou hast overthrown him?" "Ay, my Queen."
Then she, turning to Pelleas, "O young knight,
Hath the great heart of knighthood in thee fail'd
So far thou canst not bide, unfrowardly,
A fall from him?" Then, for he answer'd not,
"Or hast thou other griefs? If I, the Queen,
May help them, loose thy tongue, and let me know."
But Pelleas lifted up an eye so fierce
She quail'd; and he, hissing, "I have no sword,"
Sprang from the door into the dark. The Queen
Look'd hard upon her lover, he on her;
And each foresaw the dolorous day to be:
And all talk died, as in a grove all song
Beneath the shadow of some bird of prey,
Then a long silence came upon the hall,
And Modred thought, "The time is hard at hand."

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR.

THAT story which the bold Sir Bedivere,
First made and latest left of all the knights,
Told, when the man was no more than a voice
In the white winter of his age, to those
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other minds.

Before that last weird battle in the West
There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain kill'd
In Lancelot's war, the ghost of Gawain blown
Along a wandering wind, and past his ear
Went shrilling, "Hollow, hollow all delight!
Hail, king! to-morrow thou shalt pass away.
Farewell! there is an isle of rest for thee.
And I am blown along a wandering wind,
And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight."
And fainter onward, like wild birds that change
Their season in the night and wail their way
From cloud to cloud, down the long wind the dream
Shrill'd; but in going mingled with dim cries
Far in the moonlit haze among the hills
As of some lonely city sack'd by night,
When all is lost, and wife and child with wail
Pass to new lords; and Arthur woke and call'd,

“Who spake? A dream. O light upon the wind,
Thine, Gawain, was the voice — are these dim cries
Thine? or doth all that haunts the waste and wild
Mourn, knowing it will go along with me?”

This heard the bold Sir Bedivere and spake, —
“O me, my king, let pass whatever will,
Elves, and the harmless glamour of the field;
But in their stead thy name and glory cling
To all high places like a golden cloud
Forever: but as yet thou shalt not pass.
Light was Gawain in life, and light in death
Is Gawain, for the ghost is as the man;
And care not thou for dreams from him, but rise —
I hear the steps of Modred in the west,
And with him many of thy people, and knights
Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but grosser grown
Than heathen, spitting at their vows and thee.
Right well in heart they know thee for the king.
Arise, go forth and conquer as of old.”

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere, —
“Far other is this battle in the West
Whereto we move, than when we strove in youth,
And thrust the heathen from the Roman wall,
And shook him thro’ the north. Ill doom is mine
To war against my people and my knights.
The king who fights his people fights himself.
And they my knights who loved me once the stroke
That strikes them dead is as my death to me.
Yet let us hence and find or feel a way
Thro’ this blind haze, which ever since I saw
One lying in the dust at Almesbury,
Hath folded in the passes of the world.”

Then rose the king and moved his host by night,
And ever push’d Sir Modred, league by league,
Back to the sunset bound of Lyonesse,
A land of old upheaven from the abyss
By fire, to sink into the abyss again,
Where fragments of forgotten peoples dwelt,

And the long mountain ended in a coast
Of ever-shifting sand, and far away
The phantom circle of a moaning sea.
There the pursuer could pursue no more,
And he that fled no further fly the king ;
And there, that day when the great light of heaven
Burn'd at his lowest in the rolling year,
On the waste sand by the waste sea they closed.
Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight
Like this last, dim, weird battle of the West.
A death-white mist slept over sand and sea :
Whereof the chill, to him who breathed it, drew
Down with his blood, till all his heart was cold
With formless fear, and ev'n on Arthur fell
Confusion, since he saw not whom he fought,
For friend and foe were shadows in the mist,
And friend slew friend not knowing whom he slew ;
And some had visions out of golden youth,
And some beheld the faces of old ghosts
Look in upon the battle ; and in the mist
Was many a noble deed, many a base,
And chance and craft and strength in single fights,
And ever and anon with host to host
Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard mail hewn,
Shield-breakings, and the clash of brands, the crash
Of battle-axes on shatter'd helmets, and shrieks
After the Christ, of those who falling down
Looked up for heaven, and only saw the mist ;
And shouts of heathen and the traitor knights,
Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blasphemies,
Sweat, writhings, anguish, laboring of the lungs
In that close mist, and cryings for the light,
Moans of the dying and voices of the dead.

Last as by some one death-bed, after wail
Of suffering, silence follows, or thro' death
Or deathlike swoon, thus over all that shore,
Save for some whisper of the seething seas,
A dead hush fell ; but when the dolorous day
Grew drearier toward twilight falling, came
A bitter wind, clear from the North, and blew

The mist aside, and with that wind the tide
Rose, and the pale king glanced across the field
Of battle ; but no man was moving there ;
Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,
Nor yet of heathen ; only the wan wave
Brake in among dead faces, to and fro
Swaying the helpless hands, and up and down
Tumbling the hollow helmets of the fallen,
And shiver'd brands that once had fought with Rome,
And rolling far along the gloomy shores
The voice of days of old and days to be.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere,
And whiter than the mist that all day long
Had held the field of battle was the king.

“Hearest thou this great voice that shakes the world,
And wastes the narrow realm whereon we move,
And beats upon the faces of the dead,
My dead, as tho' they had not died for me —
O Bevidere, for on my heart hath fall'n
Confusion, till I know not what I am,
Nor whence I am, nor whether I be king.
Behold, I seem but king among the dead.”

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere, “My king,
King everywhere !” and so the dead have kings,
There also will I worship thee as king.
Yet still thy life is whole, and still I live
Who love thee ; but who hates thee, he that brought
The heathen back among us, yonder stands,
Modred, unharm'd, the traitor of thine house.”

Then spake the King, “My house hath been my doom.
But call not thou this traitor of my house
Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with me.
My house are rather they who swear my vows,
Yea, even while they brake them, own'd me king.
And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,
When all the purport of my throne hath fail'd,
That quick or dead thou holdest me for king.

King am I, whatsoever be their cry ;
And one last act of kinghood shalt thou see
Yet ere I pass." And, uttering this, the king
Made at the man : then Modred smote his liege
Hard on that helm, which many a heathen sword
Had beaten thin, while Arthur at one blow
Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,
Slew him, and all but slain himself he fell.

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea ;
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonesse about their lord,
King Arthur : then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
"The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep — the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made, —
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more — but let what will be, be.
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride : for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword — and how I row'd across

And took it, and have worn it, like a king :
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In after-time, this also shall be known :
But now delay not : take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere :
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word."

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :
"It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man.
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt :
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewelry. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw : but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted water-flags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded king.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
"Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
" I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag."

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale :
" Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight :
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word."

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought ;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud : —

" And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost forever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done ?
What harm, undone ? deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself ?
The king is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to after-time, but empty breath
And rumors of a doubt ? but were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, ' King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills.'

So might some old man speak in the after-time
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honor and much fame were lost."

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded king.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
"What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds."

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:
"Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third may prosper, get thee hence:
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands."

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendor of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur:
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm

Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the king.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath :
" Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or seen ? "

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
" Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him ;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere."

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard :
" My end draws nigh ; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die."

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words,
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the king,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, " Quick, quick !
I fear it is too late, and I shall die."

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels —
And on a sudden, lo ! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them ; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream — by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold — and from them rose
A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, "Place me in the barge,"
And to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the king, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood : for all his face was white
And colorless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east ;
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops
Of onset ; and the light and lustrous curls —
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the daïs-throne — were parch'd with dust ;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,

Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shatter'd column lay the king ;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot through the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
“ Ah ! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go ?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes ?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved,
Which was an image of the mighty world ;
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds.”

* And slowly answered Arthur from the barge :
“ The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me ?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within himself make pure ! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend ?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest — if indeed I go —
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion ;

Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

At length he groan'd, and turning slowly clomb
The last hard footstep of that iron crag ;
Thence mark'd the black hull moving yet, and cried,
"He passes to be king among the dead,
And after healing of his grievous wound
He comes again ; but — if he come no more —
O me, be yon dark Queens in yon black boat,
Who shriek'd and wail'd, the three whereat we gazed
On that high day, when, clothed with living light,
They stood before his throne in silence, friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need ?"

Then from the dawn it seem'd there came, but faint
As from beyond the limit of the world,
Like the last echo born of a great cry,
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars.

Thereat once more he moved about, and clomb
E'en to the highest he could climb, and saw,
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the king,
Down that long water opening on the deep
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
From less to less and vanish into light.
And the new sun rose bringing the new year.

NORTHERN FARMER.

OLD STYLE.

I.

WHEER 'asta beän saw long and meä liggin' 'ere aloän ?
 Noorse ? thoort nowt o' a noorse : whoy, Doctor's abeän an
 agoän :
 Says that I moänt 'a naw moor yaäle : but I beänt a fool :
 Git ma my yaäle, for I beänt a-gooïn' to break my rule.

II.

Doctors, they knaws nowt, for a says what 's nawways true .
 Naw soort o' koind o' use to saäy the things that a do.
 I've 'ed my point o' yaäle ivry noight sin' I beän 'ere,
 An' I've 'ed my quart ivry market-noight for foorty year.

III.

Parson 's a beän loikewise, an' a sittin 'ere o' my bed.
 "The amoighty 's a taäkin o' you to 'issén, my friend," a
 said,
 An' a tow'd ma my sins, an' 's toithe were due, an' I gied it
 in hond ;
 I done my duty by un, as I 'a done by the lond.

IV.

Larn'd a ma' beä. I reckons I 'annot sa mooch to larn.
 But a cost oop, thot a did, 'boot Bessy Marris's barn.
 Thof a knaws I hallus voätet wi' Squire an' choorch an
 staäte,
 An' i' the woost o' toimes I wur niver agin the raäte.

V.

An' I hallus comed to 's choorch afoor moy Sally wur deäd,
 An' 'eerd un a bummin' awaäy loike a buzzard-clock * ower
 my yeäd,
 An' I niver knaw'd whot a meän'd but I thowt a 'ad sum-
 mut to saäy,
 An I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said an' I comed awaäy

VI.

Bessy Marris's barn ! tha knaws she laäid it to meä.
 Mowt 'a beän, mayhap, for she wur a bad un, sheä.
 'Siver, I kep un, I kep un, my lass, tha mun understo d ;
 I done my duty by un as I 'a done by the lond.

VII.

But Parson a comes an' a goos, an' a says it eäsy an' freeä
 "The amoighty 's a taäkin' o' you to 'issén, my friend," says
 'eä.

I weänt saäy men be loiars, thof summun said it in 'aäste :
 But a reäds wonn sarmin a weeäk, an' I 'a stubb'd Thornaby
 waäste.

VIII.

D'ya moind the waäste, my lass ? naw, naw, tha was not
 born then ;

Theer wur a boggle in it, I often 'eerd un mysen ;
 Moäst loike a butter-bump,* for I 'eerd un aboot an' aboot,
 But I stubb'd un oop wi' the lot, an' raäved an' rembled un
 oot.

IX.

Keäper's it wur ; fo' they fun un theer a-laäid on 'is faäce
 Doon i' the woild 'enemies † afoor I comed to the plaäce.
 Noäks or Thimbleby — toner 'ed shot un as deäd as a naäil.
 Naäks wur 'ang'd for it oop at 'soize — but git ma my
 yaäle.

X.

Dubbut looäk at the waäste : theer warn't not feäd for a cow ·
 Nowt at all but bracken an' fuzz, an' looäk at it now —
 Warnt worth nowt a haäcre, an' now theer's lots o' feäd,
 Fourscore yows upon it an' some on it doon in seäd.

XI.

Nobbut a bit on it 's left, an' I meän'd to 'a stubb'd it at
 fall,

Done it ta-year I meän'd, an' runn'd plow thruff it an' all,
 If godamoighty an' parson 'ud nobbut let ma aloän,
 Meä, wi' haäte oonderd haäcre o' Squire's, an' lond o' my
 oän.

XII.

Do godamoighty knaw what a's doing a-taäkin' ö' meä ?
 I beänt wonn as saws 'ere a beän an' yonder a peä ;
 An' Squire 'ull be sa mad an' all — a' dear a' dear !
 And I 'a monaged for Squire come Michaeluas thirty year.

* Bittern.

† Anemones.

XIII.

A mowt 'a taäken Joänes, as 'ant a 'ääpoth o' sense,
 Or a mowt 'a taäken Robins — a niver mended a fence :
 But godamoighty a moost taäke meä an' taäke ma now
 Wi 'auf the cows to cauve an' Thornaby holms to plow !

XIV.

Looäk 'ow quoloty smoiles when they sees ma a passin' by,
 Says to thessén naw doot " what a mon' a beä sewer-ly ! "
 For they knaws what I beän to Squoire sin fust a comed to
 the 'All ;

I done my duty by Squoire an' I done my duty by all.

XV.

Squoire's in Lunnon, an' summun I reckons 'ull 'a to wroite,
 For who's to howd the lond ater meä thot muddles ma
 quoit ;

Sartin-sewer I beä, thot a weänt niver give it to Joänes,
 Noither a moänt to Robins — a niver rembles the stoäns.

XVI.

But summun 'ull come ater meä mayhap wi' 'is kittle o'
 steäm

Huzzin' an' maäzin' the blessed feälds 'wi' the Divil's oän
 teäm.

Gin I mun doy I mun doy, an' loife they says is sweet,

But gin I mun doy I mun doy, for I couldn abear to see it

XVII.

What atta stannin' theer for, an' doesn bring ma the yaäle ?

Doctor's a 'tottler, lass, an a's hallus i' the owd taäle ;

I weänt breäk rules for Doctor, a knaws naw moor nor a
 floy ;

Git ma my yaäle I tell tha, an' gin I mun doy I mun doy.

NORTHERN FARMER.

NEW STYLE.

I.

DOSN'T thou 'ear my 'erse's legs, as they canters awaäy?
 Proputty, proputty, proputty — that's what I 'ears 'em saäy.
 Proputty, proputty, proputty — Sam, thou's an ass for thy
 paains;
 Theer's moor sense i' one o' 'is legs nor in all thy braaäns.

II.

Woä — theer's a crow to pluck wi' tha, Sam: yon's parson's
 'ouse —
 Dosn't thou know that a man mun be eäther a man or a
 mouse?
 Time to think on it then; for thou'll be twenty to weeäk.*
 Proputty, proputty — woä then woä — let ma 'ear mysén speäk.

III.

Me an' thy muther, Sammy, 'as beän a-talkin' o' thee;
 Thou's been talkin' to muther, an' she beän a tellin' 'it me.
 Thou'll not marry for munny — thou's sweet upo' parson's
 lass —
 Noä — thou'll marry fur luvv — an' we boäth on us thinks tha
 an ass.

IV.

Seeä'd her todaäy goä by — Saäint's-daäy — they was ringing
 the bells.
 She's a beauty thou thinks — an' soä is scoors o' gells,
 Them as 'as munny an' all — wot's a beauty? — the flower as
 blaws.
 But proputty, proputty sticks, an' proputty, proputty graws.

* This week.

V.

Do'ant be stunt: * taäke time: I knaws what maäkes tha sa
mad.

Warn't I craäzed fur the lasses mysén when I wur a lad?
But I knaw'd a Quaäker feller as often 'as tow'd ma this:
"Doänt thou marry for munny, but goä wheer munny is!"

VI.

An' I went wheer munny war: an' thy mother coom to 'and,
Wi' lots o' munny laaïd by, an' a nicetish bit o' land.
Maäybe she warn't a beauty: — I niver giv it a thowt —
But warn't she as good to cuddle an' kiss as a lass as 'ant
nowt?

VII.

Parson's lass 'ant nowt, an' she weänt 'a nowt when 'e 's deäd,
Mun be a guvness, lad, or summut, and addle † her breäd:
Why? fur 'e 's nobbut a curate, an' weänt nivir git naw
'igher;
An' 'e maäde the bed as 'e ligs on afoor 'e coom'd to the shire.

VIII.

And thin 'e coom'd to the parish wi' lots o' 'Varsity debt,
Stook to his taail they did, an' 'e 'ant got shut on 'em yet.
An' 'e ligs on 'is back i' the grip, wi' noän to lend 'im a
shove,
Woorse nor a far-welter'd ‡ yowe: fur, Sammy, 'e married
fur luvv.

IX.

Luvv? what's luvv? thou can luvv thy lass an' 'er munny
too,
Maakin' 'em goä together as they've good right to do.
Could'n I luvv thy muther by cause o' 'er munny laaïd by?
Naäy — fur I luvv'd 'er a vast sight moor fur it: reäson
why.

* Obstinate.

† Earn.

‡ Or fow-welter'd — said of a sheep lying on its back in the furrow.

X.

Ay, an' thy muther says thou wants to marry the lass,
Cooms of a gentleman burn: an' we boäth on us thinks tha
an ass.

Woä then, proputtty, wiltha? — an ass as near as mays
nowt — *

Woä then, wiltha? dangtha! — the bees is as fell as out.†

XI.

Breäk me a bit o' the esh for his 'eäd, lad, out o' the fence!
Gentleman burn! what's gentleman burn? is it shillins an'
pence?

Proputtty, proputtty's ivrything 'ere, an', Sammy, I'm blest
If it isn't the saäme oop yonder, fur them as 'as it's the best.

XII.

Tis'n them as 'as munny as breäks into 'ouses an' steäls,
Them as 'as coäts to their backs an' taäkes their regular meäls.
Noä, but it's them as niver knaws wheer a meäl's to be 'ad.
Taäke my word for it, Sammy, the poor in a loomp is bad.

XIII.

Them or thir feythers, tha sees, mun 'a beän a lääzy lot,
Fur work mun 'a gone to the gittin' whiniver munny was got.
Feyther 'ad ammost nowt; leästwaays 'is munny was 'id.
But 'e tued an' moil'd 'issén deäd, an' 'e died a good un, 'e did.

XIV.

Loook throu theer wheer Wigglesby beck comes out by the 'ill!
Feyther run up to the farm, an' I runs up to the mill;
An' I'll run up to the brig, an' that thou'll live to see;
And if thou marries a good un, I'll leäve the land to thee.

XV.

Thim's my noätions, Sammy, wheerby I means to stick;
But if thou marries a bad un, I'll leäve the land to Dick. —
Coom oop, proputtty, proputtty — that's what I 'ears 'im saäy —
Proputtty, proputtty, proputtty — canter an' canter awaäy.

* Makes nothing.

† The flies are as fierce as anything.

THE VICTIM.

I.

A PLAGUE upon the people fell,
A famine after laid them low,
Then thorpe and byre arose in fire,
For on them brake the sudden foe ;
So thick they died the people cried
"The Gods are moved against the land."
The Priest in horror about his altar
To Thor and Odin lifted a hand :
"Help us from famine
And plague and strife!
What would you have of us?
Human life?
Were it our nearest,
Were it our dearest,
(Answer, O answer)
We give you his life."

II.

But still the foeman spoil'd and burn'd,
And cattle died, and deer in wood,
And bird in air, and fishes turn'd
And whiten'd all the rolling flood ;
And dead men lay all over the way,
Or down in a furrow scathed with flame :
And ever and aye the Priesthood moan'd
Till at last it seem'd that an answer came :
"The King is happy
In child and wife ;
Take you his dearest,
Give us a life."

III.

The Priest went out by heath and hill ;
The King was hunting in the wild ;
They found the mother sitting still ;
She cast her arms about the child.
The child was only eight summers old,
His beauty still with his years increased,
His face was ruddy, his hair was gold,
He seem'd a victim due to the priest.
The Priest beheld him,
And cried with joy,
" The Gods have answer'd :
We give them the boy."

IV.

The King return'd from out the wild,
He bore but little game in hand ;
The mother said : " They have taken the child
To spill his blood and heal the land :
The land is sick, the people diseased,
And blight and famine on all the lea :
The holy Gods, they must be appeased,
So I pray you tell the truth to me.
They have taken our son,
They will have his life.
Is *he* your dearest ?
Or I, the wife ? "

V.

The King bent low, with hand on brow,
He stay'd his arms upon his knee :
" O wife, what use to answer now ?
For now the Priest has judged for me."
The King was shaken with holy fear ;
" The Gods," he said, " would have chosen well ;
Yet both are near, and both are dear,
And which the dearest I cannot tell ! "

But the Priest was happy,
 His victim won :
 " We have his dearest,
 His only son ! "

VI.

The rites prepared, the victim bared,
 The knife uprising toward the blow,
 To the altar-stone she sprang alone,
 " Me, not my darling, no ! "
 He caught her away with a sudden cry ;
 Suddenly from him brake his wife,
 And shrieking "*I am his dearest, I —*
I am his dearest !" rush'd on the knife.
 And the Priest was happy,
 " O, Father Odin,
 We give you a life.
 Which was his nearest ?
 Who was his dearest ?
 The Gods have answer'd ;
 We give them the wife ! "

WAGES.

GLORY of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
 Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea —
 Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong —
 Nay, but she aim'd not at glory, no lover of glory she :
 Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

The wages of sin is death : if the wages of Virtue be dust,
 Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm
 and the fly ?
 She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
 To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky :
 Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

THE HIGHER PANTHEISM.

THE sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the
plains —

Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?

Is not the Vision He? tho' He be not that which He seems?
Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him?

Dark is the world to thee: thyself art the reason why;
For is He not all but thou, that hast power to feel "I am I!"

Glory about thee, without thee: and thou fulfillest thy doom,
Making Him broken gleams, and a stifled splendor and gloom.

Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can
meet —

Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

God is law, say the wise, O Soul, and let us rejoice,
For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice.

Law is God, say some: no God at all, says the fool;
For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent in a pool;

And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot
see;

But if we could see and hear, this Vision — were it not He?

FLOWER in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies; —
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower — but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

LUCRETIVS.

LUCILIA, wedded to Lucretius, found
 Her master cold ; for when the morning flush
 Of passion and the first embrace had died
 Between them, tho' he loved her none the less,
 Yet often when the woman heard his foot
 Return from pacings in the field, and ran
 To greet him with a kiss, the master took
 Small notice, or austere, for — his mind
 Half buried in some weightier argument,
 Or fancy-borne perhaps upon the rise
 And long roll of the Hexameter — he past
 To turn and ponder those three hundred scrolls
 Left by the Teacher whom he held divine.
 She brook'd it not ; but wrathful, petulant,
 Dreaming some rival, sought and found a witch
 Who brew'd the philter which had power, they said,
 To lead an errant passion home again.
 And this, at times, she mingled with his drink,
 And this destroy'd him ; for the wicked broth
 Confused the chemic labor of the blood,
 And tickling the brute brain within the man's,
 Made havoc among those tender cells, and check'd
 His power to shape : he loath'd himself ; and once
 After a tempest woke upon a morn
 That mock'd him with returning calm, and cried :

“ Storm in the night ! for thrice I heard the rain
 Rushing ; and once the flash of a thunderbolt —
 Methought I never saw so fierce a fork —
 Struck out the streaming mountain-side, and show'd
 A riotous confluence of watercourses
 Blanching and billowing in a hollow of it,
 Where all but yester-eve was dusty-dry.

“ Storm, and what dreams, ye holy Gods, what dreams !
 For thrice I waken'd after dreams. Perchance

We do but recollect the dreams that come
 Just ere the waking : terrible ! for it seem'd
 A void was made in Nature ; all her bonds
 Crack'd ; and I saw the flaring atom-streams
 And torrents of her myriad universe,
 Ruining along the illimitable inane,
 Fly on to clash together again, and make
 Another and another frame of things
 Forever : that was mine, my dream, I knew it
 Of and belonging to me, as the dog
 With inward yelp and restless forefoot plies
 His function of the woodland : but the next !
 I thought that all the blood by Sylla shed
 Came driving rainlike down again on earth,
 And where it dash'd the reddening meadow, sprang
 No dragon warriors from Cadmean teeth,
 For these I thought my dream would show to me,
 But girls, Hetairai, curious in their art,
 Hired animalisms, vile as those that made
 The mulberry-faced Dictator's orgies worse
 Than aught they fable of the quiet Gods.
 And hands they mixt, and yell'd and round me drove
 In narrowing circles till I yell'd again
 Half suffocated, and sprang up, and saw —
 Was it the first beam of my latest day ?

“ Then, then, from utter gloom stood out the breasts,
 The breasts of Helen, and hoveringly a sword
 Now over and now under, now direct,
 Pointed itself to pierce, but sank down shamed
 At all that beauty : and as I stared, a fire,
 The fire that left a roofless Ilium,
 Shot out of them, and scorch'd me that I woke.

“ Is this thy vengeance, holy Venus, thine,
 Because I would not one of thine own doves,
 Not even a rose, were offer'd to thee ? thine,
 Forgetful how my rich proœmion makes
 Thy glory fly along the Italian field,
 In lays that will outlast thy Deity ?

“Deity? nay, thy worshippers. My tongue
Trips, or I speak profanely. Which of these
Angers thee most, or angers thee at all?
Not if thou be'st of those who far aloof
From envy, hate and pity, and spite and scorn,
Live the great life which all our greatest fain
Would follow, centr'd in eternal calm.

“Nay, if thou canst, O Goddess, like ourselves
Touch, and be touch'd, then would I cry to thee
To kiss thy Mavors, roll thy tender arms
Round him, and keep him from the lust of blood
That makes a steaming slaughter-house of Rome.

“Ay, but I meant not thee; I meant not her,
Whom all the pines of Ida shook to see
Slide from that quiet heaven of hers, and tempt
The Trojan, while his neat-herds were abroad;
Nor her that o'er her wounded hunter wept
Her Deity false in human-amorous tears;
Nor whom her beardless apple-arbiter
Decided fairest. Rather, O ye Gods,
Poet-like, as the great Sicilian called
Calliope to grace his golden verse —
Ay, and this Kypris also — did I take
That popular name of thine to shadow forth
The all-generating powers and genial heat
Of Nature, when she strikes through the thick blood
Of cattle, and light is large and lambs are glad
Nosing the mother's udder, and the bird
Makes his heart voice amid the blaze of flowers,
Which things appear the work of mighty Gods.

“The Gods! and if I go *my* work is left
Unfinished — *if* I go. The Gods, who haunt
The lucid interspace of world and world,
Where never creeps a cloud, or moves a wind,
Nor ever falls the least white star of snow,
Nor ever lowest roll of thunder moans,
Nor sound of human sorrow mounts to mar
Their sacred everlasting calm! and such,

Not all so fine, nor so divine a calm,
 Not such, nor all unlike it, man may gain
 Letting his own life go. The Gods, the Gods!
 If all be atoms, how then should the Gods
 Being atomic not be dissoluble,
 Not follow the great law? My master held
 That Gods there are, for all men so believe.
 I prest my footsteps into his, and meant
 Surely to lead my Memmius in a train
 Of flowery clauses onward to the proof
 That Gods there are, and deathless. Meant? I meant?
 I have forgotten what I meant: my mind
 Stumbles, and all my faculties are lamed.

“Look where another of our Gods, the Sun,
 Apollo, Delius, or of older use
 All-seeing Hyperion — what you will —
 Has mounted yonder; since he never sware,
 Except his wrath were wreak'd on wretched man,
 That he would only shine among the dead
 Hereafter; tales! for never yet on earth
 Could dead flesh creep, or bits of roasting ox
 Moan round the spit — nor knows he what he sees;
 King of the East altho' he seem, and girt
 With song and flame and fragrance, slowly lifts
 His golden feet on those empurpled stairs
 That climb into the windy halls of heaven:
 And here he glances on an eye new-born,
 And gets for greeting but a wail of pain;
 And here he stays upon a freezing orb
 That fain would gaze upon him to the last:
 And here upon a yellow eyelid fall'n
 And closed by those who mourn a friend in vain,
 Not thankful that his troubles are no more.
 And me, altho' his fire is on my face
 Blinding, he sees not, nor at all can tell
 Whether I mean this day to end myself,
 Or lend an ear to Plato where he says,
 That men like soldiers may not quit the post
 Allotted by the Gods: but he that holds
 The Gods are careless, wherefore need he care

Greatly for them, nor rather plunge at once,
Being troubled, wholly out of sight, and sink
Past earthquake — ay, and gout and stone, that break
Body toward death, and palsy, death-in-life,
And wretched age — and worst disease of all,
These prodigies of myriad nakednesses,
And twisted shapes of lust, unspeakable,
Abominable, strangers at my hearth
Not welcome, harpies miring every dish,
The phantom husks of something foully done,
And fleeting thro' the boundless universe,
And blasting the long quiet of my breast
With animal heat and dire insanity.

“ How should the mind, except it loved them, clasp
These idols to herself? or do they fly
Now thinner, and now thicker, like the flakes
In a fall of snow, and so press in, perforce
Of multitude, as crowds that in an hour
Of civic tumult jam the doors, and bear
The keepers down, and throng their rags and they,
The basest, far into that council-hall
Where sit the best and stateliest of the land?

“ Can I not fling this horror off me again,
Seeing with how great ease Nature can smile,
Balmier and nobler from her bath of storm,
At random ravage? and how easily
The mountain there has cast his cloudy slough,
Now towering o'er him in serenest air,
A mountain o'er a mountain, ay, and within
All hollow as the hopes and fears of men.

“ But who was he, that in the garden snared
Picus and Faunus, rustic Gods? a tale
To laugh at — more to laugh at in myself —
For look! what is it? there? yon arbutus
Totters; a noiseless riot underneath
Strikes through the wood, sets all the tops quivering —
The mountain quickens into Nymph and Faun;
And here an Oread — how the sun delights

To glance and shift about her slippery sides,
And rosy knees and supple roundedness,
And budded bosom-peaks — who this way runs
Before the rest — A satyr, a satyr, see —
Follows; but him I proved impossible;
Twy-natured is no nature: yet he draws
Nearer and nearer, and I scan him now
Beastlier than any phantom of his kind
That ever butted his rough brother-brute
For lust or lusty blood or provender:
I hate, abhor, spit, sicken at him; and she
Loathes him as well; such a precipitate heel,
Fledged as it were with Mercury's ankle-wing,
Whirls her to me: but will she fling herself,
Shameless upon me? Catch her, goatfoot: nay,
Hide, hide them, million-myrtled wilderness,
And cavern-shadowing laurels, hide! do I wish —
What? — that the bush were leafless? or to whelm
All of them in one massacre? O ye Gods,
I know you careless, yet, behold, to you
From childly wont and ancient use I call —
I thought I lived securely as yourselves —
No lewdness, narrowing envy, monkey-spite,
No madness of ambition, avarice, none:
No larger feast than under plane or pine
With neighbors laid along the grass, to take
Only such cups as left us friendly warm,
Affirming each his own philosophy —
Nothing to mar the sober majesties
Of settled, sweet, Epicurean life.
But now it seems some unseen monster lays
His vast and filthy hands upon my will,
Wrenching it backward into his; and spoils
My bliss in being; and it was not great;
For save when shutting reasons up in rhythm,
Or Heliconian honey in living words,
To make a truth less harsh, I often grew
Tired of so much within our little life,
Or of so little in our little life —
Poor little life that toddles half an hour
Crown'd with a flower or two, and there an end —

And since the nobler pleasure seems to fade,
Why should I, beastlike as I find myself,
Not manlike end myself? — our privilege —
What beast has heart to do it? And what man,
What Roman would be dragg'd in triumph thus?
Not I; not he, who bears one name with her,
Whose death-blow struck the dateless doom of kings,
When brooking not the Tarquin in her veins,
She made her blood in sight of Collatine
And all his peers, flushing the guiltless air,
Spout from the maiden fountain in her heart.
And from it sprang the Commonwealth, which breaks
As I am breaking now!

“And therefore now

Let her, that is the womb and tomb of all,
Great Nature, take, and forcing far apart
Those blind beginnings that have made me man
Dash them anew together at her will
Through all her cycles — into man once more,
Or beast or bird or fish, or opulent flower —
But till this cosmic order everywhere
Shatter'd into one earthquake in one day
Cracks all to pieces, — and that hour perhaps
Is not so far when momentary man
Shall seem no more a something to himself,
But he, his hopes and hates, his homes and fanes,
And even his bones long laid within the grave,
The very sides of the grave itself shall pass,
Vanishing, atom and void, atom and void,
Into the unseen forever, — till that hour,
My golden work in which I told a truth
That stays the rolling Ixionian wheel,
And numbs the Fury's ringlet-snake, and plucks
The mortal soul from out immortal hell,
Shall stand: ay, surely: then it fails at last,
And perishes as I must; for O Thou,
Passionless bride, divine Tranquillity,
Yearn'd after by the wisest of the wise,
Who fail to find thee, being as thou art
Without one pleasure and without one pain,

Howbeit I know thou surely must be mine
 Or soon or late, yet out of season, thus
 I woo thee roughly, for thou carest not
 How roughly men may woo thee so they win —
 Thus — thus : the soul flies out and dies in the air.”

With that he drove the knife into his side :
 She heard him raging, heard him fall ; ran in,
 Beat breast, tore hair, cried out upon herself
 As having fail'd in duty to him, shriek'd
 That she but meant to win him back, fell on him,
 Clasp'd, kiss'd him, wail'd : he answer'd, “Care not thou.
 What matters ? All is over : Fare thee well !”

THE GOLDEN SUPPER.

[This poem is founded upon a story in Boccaccio.

A young lover, Julian, whose cousin and foster-sister, Camilla, has been wedded to his friend and rival, Lionel, endeavors to narrate the story of his own love for her, and the strange sequel of it. He speaks of having been haunted in delirium by visions and the sound of bells, sometimes tolling for a funeral, and at last ringing for a marriage ; but he breaks away, overcome, as he approaches the Event, and a witness to it completes the tale.]

* * * *

HE flies the event : he leaves the event to me :
 Poor Julian — how he rush'd away ; the bells,
 Those marriage-bells, echoing in ear and heart —
 But cast a parting glance at me, you saw,
 As who should say “continue.” Well, he had
 One golden hour — of triumph shall I say ?
 Solace at least — before he left his home.

Would you had seen him in that hour of his !
 He moved thro' all of it majestically —
 Restrain'd himself quite to the close — but now —

Whether they *were* his lady's marriage-bells,
 Or prophets of them in his fantasy,
 I never ask'd : but Lionel and the girl

Were wedded, and our Julian came again.
 Back to his mother's house among the pines.
 But there, their gloom, the mountains and the Bay,
 The whole land weigh'd him down as Ætna does
 The Giant of Mythology: he would go,
 Would leave the land forever, and had gone
 Surely, but for a whisper "Go not yet,"
 Some warning, and divinely as it seem'd
 By that which follow'd — but of this I deem
 As of the visions that he told — the event
 Glanced back upon them in his after life,
 And partly made them — tho' he knew it not.

And thus he stay'd and would not look at her —
 No, not for months: but, when the eleventh moon
 After their marriage lit the lover's Bay,
 Heard yet once more the tolling bell, and said,
 Would you could toll me out of life, but found —
 All softly as his mother broke it to him —
 A crueller reason than a crazy ear,
 For that low knell tolling his lady dead —
 Dead — and had lain three days without a pulse:
 All that look'd on her had pronounced her dead.
 And so they bore her (for in Julian's land
 They never nail a dumb head up in elm),
 Bore her free-faced to the free airs of heaven,
 And laid her in the vault of her own kin.

What did he then? not die: he is here and hale —
 Not plunge headforemost from the mountain there,
 And leave the name of Lover's Leap: not he:
 He knew the meaning of the whisper now,
 Thought that he knew it. "This, I stay'd for this;
 O love, I have not seen you for so long.
 Now, now, will I go down into the grave,
 I will be all alone with all I love,
 And kiss her on the lips. She is his no more:
 The dead returns to me, and I go down
 To kiss the dead."

The fancy stirr'd him so
 He rose and went, and entering the dim vault,

And, making there a sudden light, beheld
All round about him that which all will be.
The light was but a flash, and went again.
Then at the far end of the vault he saw
His lady with the moonlight on her face;
Her breast as in a shadow-prison, bars
Of black and bands of silver, which the moon
Struck from an open grating overhead
High in the wall, and all the rest of her
Drown'd in the gloom and horror of the vault.

“It was my wish,” he said, “to pass, to sleep,
To rest, to be with her — till the great day
Peal'd on us with that music which rights all,
And raised us hand in hand.” And kneeling there
Down in the dreadful dust that once was man,
Dust, as he said, that once was loving hearts,
Hearts that had beat with such a love as mine —
Not such as mine, no, nor for such as her —
He softly put his arm about her neck
And kissed her more than once, till helpless death
And silence made him bold — nay, but I wrong him,
He revered his dear lady even in death;
But, placing his true hand upon her heart,
“O, you warm heart,” he moaned, “not even death
Can chill you all at once:” then starting, thought
His dreams had come again. “Do I wake or sleep?
Or am I made immortal, or my love
Mortal once more?” It beat — the heart — it beat:
Faint — but it beat: at which his own began
To pulse with such a vehemence that it drown'd
The feebler motion underneath his hand.
But when at last his doubts were satisfied,
He raised her softly from the sepulchre,
And, wrapping her all over with the cloak
He came in, and now striding fast, and now
Sitting awhile to rest, but evermore
Holding his golden burden in his arms,
So bore her through the solitary land
Back to the mother's house where she was born.

There the good mother's kindly ministering,
With half a night's appliances, recall'd
Her fluttering life: she raised an eye that ask'd
"Where?" till the things familiar to her youth
Had made a silent answer: then she spoke,
"Here! and how came I here?" and learning it
(They told her somewhat rashly as I think)
At once began to wander and to wail,
"Ay, but you know that you must give me back:
Send! bid him come;" but Lionel was away,
Stung by his loss had vanish'd, none knew where.
"He casts me out," she wept, "and goes" — a wail
That seeming something, yet was nothing, born
Not from believing mind, but shatter'd nerve,
Yet haunting Julian, as her own reproof
At some precipitance in her burial.
Then, when her own true spirit had return'd,
"O yes, and you," she said, "and none but you.
For you have given me life and love again,
And none but you yourself shall tell him of it,
And you shall give me back when he returns."
"Stay then a little," answer'd Julian, "here,
And keep yourself, none knowing, to yourself;
And I will do your will. I may not stay,
No, not an hour; but send me notice of him
When he returns, and then will I return,
And I will make a solemn offering of you
To him you love." And faintly she replied,
"And I will do *your* will, and none shall know."

Not know? with such a secret to be known.
But all their house was old and loved them both,
And all the house had known the loves of both;
Had died almost to serve them any way,
And all the land was waste and solitary:
And then he rode away; but after this,
An hour or two, Camilla's travail came
Upon her, and that day a boy was born,
Heir of his face and land, to Lionel.

And thus our lonely lover rode away,

And pausing at a hostel in a marsh,
There fever seized upon him : myself was then
Travelling that land, and meant to rest an hour ;
And sitting down to such a base repast,
It makes me angry yet to speak of it —
I heard a groaning overhead, and climb'd
The moulder'd stairs (for everything was vile),
And in a loft, with none to wait on him,
Found, as it seem'd, a skeleton alone,
Raving of dead men's dust and beating hearts.

A dismal hostel in a dismal land,
A flat malarian world of reed and rush !
But there from fever and my care of him
Sprang up a friendship that may help us yet.
For while we roam'd along the dreary coast,
And waited for her message, piece by piece
I learnt the drearier story of his life ;
And, tho' he loved and honor'd Lionel,
Found that the sudden wail his lady made
Dwelt in his fancy : did he know her worth,
Her beauty even ? should he not be taught,
Ev'n by the price that others set upon it,
The value of that jewel he had to guard ?

Suddenly came her notice, and we past,
I with our lover to his native Bay.

This love is of the brain, the mind, the soul :
That makes the sequel pure ; tho' some of us
Beginning at the sequel know no more.
Not such am I : and yet I say, the bird
That will not hear my call, however sweet,
But if my neighbor whistle answers him —
What matter ? there are others in the wood.
Yet when I saw her (and I thought him crazed,
Tho' not with such a craziness as needs
A cell and keeper), those dark eyes of hers —
Oh ! such dark eyes ! and not her eyes alone,
But all from these to where she touch'd on earth,
For such a craziness as Julian's seem'd
No less than one divine apology.

So sweetly and so modestly she came
To greet us, her young hero in her arms!
"Kiss him," she said. "You gave me life again.
He, but for you, had never seen it once.
His other father you! Kiss him, and then
Forgive him, if his name be Julian too."

Talk of lost hopes and broken heart! his own
Sent such a flame into his face, I knew
Some sudden vivid pleasure hit him there.

But he was all the more resolved to go,
And sent at once to Lionel, praying him
By that great love they both had borne the dead,
To come and revel for one hour with him
Before he left the land forevermore;
And then to friends — they were not many — who lived
Scatteringly about that lonely land of his,
And bade them to a banquet of farewells.

And Julian made a solemn feast: I never
Sat at a costlier; for all round his hall
From column on to column, as in a wood,
Not such as here — an equatorial one,
Great garlands swung and blossom'd; and beneath,
Heirlooms, and ancient miracles of Art,
Chalice and salver, wines that, Heaven knows when,
Had suck'd the fire of some forgotten sun,
And kept it through a hundred years of gloom,
Yet glowing in a heart of ruby — cups
Where nymph and god ran ever round in gold —
Others of glass as costly — some with gems
Movable and resettable at will,
And trebling all the rest in value — Ah heavens!
Why need I tell you all? — suffice to say
That whatsoever such a house as his,
And his was old, has in it rare or fair,
Was brought before the guest: and they, the guests,
Wonder'd at some strange light in Julian's eyes
(I told you that he had his golden hour),
And such a feast, ill-suited as it seem'd

To such a time, to Lionel's loss and his,
And that resolved self-exile from a land
He never would revisit, such a feast,
So rich, so strange, and stranger ev'n than rich,
But rich as for the nuptials of a king.

And stranger yet, at one end of the hall
Two great funereal curtains, looping down,
Parted a little ere they met the floor,
About a picture of his lady, taken
Some years before, and falling hid the frame.
And just above the parting was a lamp :
So the sweet figure folded round with night
Seem'd stepping out of darkness with a smile.

Well then — our solemn feast — we ate and drank,
And might — the wines being of such nobleness —
Have jested also, but for Julian's eyes,
And something weird and wild about it all :
What was it ? for our lover seldom spoke,
Scarce touch'd the meats ; but ever and anon
A priceless goblet with a priceless wine
Arising, show'd he drank beyond his use ;
And when the feast was near an end, he said :

“ There is a custom in the Orient, friends —
I read of it in Persia — when a man
Will honor those who feast with him, he brings
And shows them whatsoever he accounts
Of all his treasures the most beautiful,
Gold, jewels, arms, whatever it may be.
This custom — ”

Pausing here a moment, all
The guests broke in upon him with meeting hands
And cries about the banquet — “ Beautiful !
Who could desire more beauty at a feast ? ”

The lover answer'd, “ There is more than one
Here sitting who desires it. Laud me not
Before my time, but hear me to the close.

This custom steps yet further when the guest
Is loved and honor'd to the uttermost.
For after he has shown him gems or gold,
He brings and sets before him in rich guise
That which is thrice as beautiful as these,
The beauty that is dearest to his heart —
'O my heart's lord, would I could show you,' he says,
'Ev'n my heart too.' And I propose to-night
To show you what is dearest to my heart,
And my heart too.

“ But solve me first a doubt.

I knew a man, nor many years ago ;
He had a faithful servant, one who loved
His master more than all on earth beside.
He falling sick, and seeming close on death,
His master would not wait until he died,
But bade his menials bear him from the door,
And leave him in the public way to die.
I knew another, not so long ago,
Who found the dying servant, took him home,
And fed, and cherish'd him, and saved his life.
I ask you now, should this first master claim
His service, whom does it belong to ? him
Who thrust him out, or him who saved his life ? ”

This question, so flung down before the guests,
And balanced either way by each, at length
When some were doubtful how the law would hold,
Was handed over by consent of all
To one who had not spoken, Lionel.

Fair speech was his, and delicate of phrase.
And he beginning languidly — his loss
Weigh'd on him yet — but warming as he went,
Glanced at the point of law, to pass it by,
Affirming that as long as either lived,
By all the laws of love and gratefulness,
The service of the one so saved was due
All to the saver — adding, with a smile,
The first for many weeks — a semi-smile

As at a strong conclusion — “ Body and soul
And life and limbs, all his to work his will.”

Then Julian made a secret sign to me
To bring Camilla down before them all.
And crossing her own picture as she came,
And looking as much lovelier as herself
Is lovelier than all others — on her head
A diamond circlet, and from under this
A veil, that seem'd no more than gilded air,
Flying by each fine ear, an Eastern gauze
With seeds of gold — so, with that grace of hers,
Slow-moving as a wave against the wind,
That flings a mist behind it in the sun —
And bearing high in arms the mighty babe,
The younger Julian, who himself was crown'd
With roses, none so rosy as himself —
And over all her babe and her the jewels
Of many generations of his house
Sparkled and flash'd, for he had decked them out
As for a solemn sacrifice of love —
So she came in : — I am long in telling it.
I never yet beheld a thing so strange,
Sad, sweet, and strange together — floated in, —
While all the guests in mute amazement rose,
And slowly pacing to the middle hall,
Before the board, there paused and stood, her breast
Hard-heaving, and her eyes upon her feet,
Not daring yet to glance at Lionel.
But him she carried, him nor lights nor feast
Dazed or amazed, nor eyes of men ; who cared
Only to use his own, and staring wide
And hungering for the gilt and jewell'd world
About him; look'd, as he is like to prove,
When Julian goes, the lord of all he saw.

“ My guests,” said Julian : “ you are honor'd now
Ev'n to the uttermost : in her behold
Of all my treasures the most beautiful,
Of all things upon earth the dearest to me.”
Then waving us a sign to seat ourselves,

Led his dear lady to a chair of state.
And I, by Lionel sitting, saw his face
Fire, and dead ashes and all fire again
Thrice in a second, felt him tremble too,
And heard him muttering, "So like, so like;
She never had a sister. I knew nore.
Some cousin of his and hers — O God, so like!"
And then he suddenly ask'd her if she were.
She shook, and cast her eyes down, and was dumb.
And then some other question'd if she came
From foreign lands, and still she did not speak.
Another, if the boy were hers: but she
To all their queries answer'd not a word,
Which made the amazement more, till one of them
Said, shuddering, "Her spectre!" But his friend
Replied, in half a whisper, "Not at least
The spectre that will speak if spoken to.
Terrible pity, if one so beautiful
Prove, as I almost dread to find her, dumb!"

But Julian, sitting by her, answer'd all:
"She is but dumb, because in her you see
That faithful servant whom we spoke about,
Obedient to her second master now;
Which will not last. I have here to-night a guest
So bound to me by common love and loss —
What! shall I bind him more? in his behalf,
Shall I exceed the Persian, giving him
That which of all things is the dearest to me,
Not only showing? and he himself pronounced
That my rich gift is wholly mine to give.

"Now all be dumb, and promise all of you
Not to break in on what I say by word
Or whisper, while I show you all my heart."
And then began the story of his love
As here to-day, but not so wordily —
The passionate moment would not suffer that —
Past thro' his visions to the burial; thence
Down to this last strange hour in his own hall;
And then rose up, and with him all his guests

Once more as by enchantment ; all but he,
Lionel, who fain had risen, but fell again,
And sat as if in chains — to whom he said :

“ Take my free gift, my cousin, for your wife ;
And were it only for the giver's sake,
And tho' she seem so like the one you lost,
Yet cast her not away so suddenly,
Lest there be none left here to bring her back :
I leave this land forever.” Here he ceased.

Then taking his dear lady by one hand,
And bearing on one arm the noble babe,
He slowly brought them both to Lionel.
And there the widower husband and dead wife
Rush'd each at each with a cry, that rather seem'd
For some new death than for a life renew'd ;
At this the very babe began to wail ;
At once they turn'd, and caught and brought him in
To their charm'd circle, and, half killing him
With kisses, round him closed and claspt again.
But Lionel, when at last he freed himself
From wife and child, and lifted up a face
All over glowing with the sun of life,
And love, and boundless thanks — the sight of this
So frighted our good friend, that turning to me
And saying, “ It is over : let us go ” —
There were our horses ready at the doors —
We bade them no farewell, but mounting these
He past forever from his native land ;
And I with him, my Julian, back to mine.

AYLMER'S FIELD.

1793.

DUST are our frames ; and, gilded dust, our pride
 Looks only for a moment whole and sound ;
 Like that long-buried body of the king,
 Found lying with his urns and ornaments,
 Which at a touch of light, an air of heaven,
 Slipt into ashes and was found no more.

Here is a story which in rougher shape
 Came from a grizzled cripple, whom I saw
 Sunning himself in a waste field alone —
 Old, and a mine of memories — who had served,
 Long since, a bygone Rector of the place,
 And been himself a part of what he told.

SIR AYLMEY AYLMEY that almighty man,
 The county God — in whose capacious hall,
 Hung with a hundred shields, the family-tree
 Sprang from the midriff of a prostrate king —
 Whose blazing wyvern weathercock'd the spire,
 Stood from his walls and wing'd his entry-gates
 And swang besides on many a windy sign —
 Whose eyes from under a pyramidal head
 Saw from his windows nothing save his own —
 What lovelier of his own had he than her,
 His only child, his Edith, whom he loved
 As heiress and not heir regretfully ?
 But, " he that marries her marries her name,"
 This fiat somewhat soothed himself and wife,
 His wife a faded beauty of the Baths,
 Insipid as the Queen upon a card ;
 Her all of thought and bearing hardly more
 Than his own shadow in a sickly sun.

A land of hops and poppy-mingled corn,
 Little about it stirring save a brook !
 A sleepy land where under the same wheel
 The same old rut would deepen year by year ;
 Where almost all the village had one name ;

Where Aylmer follow'd Aylmer at the Hall
 And Averill Averill at the Rectory
 Thrice over; so that Rectory and Hall,
 Bound in an immemorial intimacy,
 Were open to each other; tho' to dream
 That Love could bind them closer well had made
 The hoar hair of the Baronet bristle up
 With horror, worse than had he heard his priest
 Preach an inverted scripture, sons of men
 Daughters of God; so sleepy was the land.

And might not Averill, had he will'd it so,
 Somewhere beneath his own low range of roofs,
 Have also set his many-shielded tree?
 There was an Aylmer-Averill marriage once,
 When the red rose was redder than itself,
 And York's white rose as red as Lancaster's,
 With wounded peace which each had prick'd to death.
 "Not proven," Averill said, or laughingly
 "Some other race of Averills," — prov'n or no,
 What cared he? what, if other or the same?
 He lean'd not on his fathers but himself.
 But Leolin, his brother, living oft
 With Averill, and a year or two before
 Call'd to the bar, but ever call'd away
 By one low voice to one dear neighborhood,
 Would often, in his walks with Edith, claim
 A distant kinship to the gracious blood
 That shook the heart of Edith hearing him.

Sanguine he was: a but less vivid hue
 Than of that islet in the chestnut-bloom
 Flamed in his cheek; and eager eyes, that still
 Took joyful note of all things joyful, beam'd,
 Beneath a manelike mass of rolling gold,
 Their best and brightest, when they dwelt on hers,
 Edith, whose pensive beauty, perfect else,
 But subject to the season or the mood,
 Shone like a mystic star between the less
 And greater glory varying to and fro,
 We know not wherefore; bounteously made,
 And yet so finely, that a troublous touch
 Thinn'd, or would seem to thin her in a day,
 A joyous to dilate, as toward the light.
 And these had been together from the first.

Leolin's first nurse was, five years after, hers :
So much the boy foreran ; but when his date
Doubled her own, for want of playmates, he
(Since Averill was a decade and a half
His elder, and their parents underground)
Had tost his ball and flown his kite, and roll'd
His hoop to pleasure Edith, with her dipt
Against the rush of the air in the prone swing,
Made blossom-ball or daisy-chain, arranged
Her garden, sow'd her name and kept it green
In living letters, told her fairy-tales,
Show'd her the fairy footings on the grass,
The little dells of cowslip, fairy palms,
The petty mare's-tail forest, fairy pines
Or from the tiny pitted target blew
What look'd a flight of fairy arrows aim'd
All at one mark, all hitting : make-believes
For Edith and himself : or else he forged,
But that was later, boyish histories
Of battle, bold adventure, dungeon, wreck,
Flights, terrors, sudden rescues, and true love
Crown'd after trial ; sketches rude and faint,
But where a passion yet unborn perhaps
Lay hidden as the music of the moon
Sleeps in the plain eggs of the nightingale.
And thus together, save for college-times
Or Temple-eaten terms, a couple, fair
As ever painter painted, poet sang,
Or Heav'n in lavish bounty moulded, grew.
And more and more, the maiden woman-grown,
He wasted hours with Averill ; there, when first
The tented winter-field was broken up
Into that phalanx of the summer spears
That soon should wear the garland ; there again
When burr and bine were gather'd ; lastly there
At Christmas ; ever welcome at the Hall,
On whose dull sameness his full tide of youth
Broke with a phosphorescence cheering even
My lady ; and the Baronet yet had laid
No bar between them : dull and self-involved,
Tall and erect, but bending from his height
With half-allowing smiles for all the world,
And mighty courteous in the main — his pride
Lay deeper than to wear it as his ring —
He, like an Aylmer in his Aylmerism.

Would care no more for Leolin's walking with her
Than for his old Newfoundland's, when they ran
To loose him at the stables, for he rose
Twofooted at the limit of his chain,
Roaring to make a third : and how should Love,
Whom the cross-lightnings of four chance-met eyes
Flash into fiery life from nothing, follow
Such dear familiarities of dawn ?
Seldom, but when he does, Master of all.

So these young hearts not knowing that they loved,
Not she at least, nor conscious of a bar
Between them, nor by plight or broken ring
Bound, but an immemorial intimacy,
Wander'd at will, but oft accompanied
By Averill : his, a brother's love, that hung
With wings of brooding shelter o'er her peace,
Might have been other, save for Leolin's —
Who knows ? but so they wander'd, hour by hour
Gather'd the blossom that rebloom'd, and drank
The magic cup that fill'd itself anew.

A whisper half reveal'd her to herself.
For out beyond her lodges, where the brook
Vocal, with here and there a silence, ran
By sallowy rims, arose the laborers' homes,
A frequent haunt of Edith, on low knolls
That dimpling died into each other, huts
At random scatter'd, each a nest in bloom.
Her art, her hand, her counsel all had wrought
About them : here was one that, summer-blanch'd,
Was parcel-bearded with the traveller's joy
In Autumn, parcel ivy-clad ; and here
The warm-blue breathings of a hidden hearth
Broke from a bower of vine and honeysuckle :
One look'd all rose-tree, and another wore
A close-set robe of jasmine sown with stars :
This had a rosy sea of gillyflowers
About it ; this, a milky-way on earth,
Like visions in the Northern dreamer's heavens,
A lily-avenue climbing to the doors ;
One, almost to the martin-haunted eaves
A summer-burial deep in hollyhocks ;
Each, its own charm ; and Edith's everywhere ;
And Edith ever visitant with him,

As but less loved than Edith, of her poor :
 For she — so lowly-lovely and so loving,
 Queenly responsive when the loyal hand
 Rose from the clay it work'd in as she past,
 Not sowing hedgerow texts and passing by,
 Nor dealing goodly counsel from a height
 That makes the lowest hate it, but a voice
 Of comfort and an open hand of help,
 A splendid presence flattering the poor roofs
 Revered as theirs, but kindlier than themselves
 To ailing wife or wailing infancy
 Or old bedridden palsy, — was adored ;
 He, loved for her and for himself. A grasp
 Having the warmth and muscle of the heart,
 A childly way with children, and a laugh
 Ringing like proven golden coinage true,
 Were no false passport to that easy realm,
 Where once with Leolin at her side the girl,
 Nursing a child, and turning to the warmth
 The tender pink five-beaded baby-soles,
 Heard the good mother softly whisper, " Bless,
 God bless 'em : marriages are made in Heaven."

A flash of semi-jealousy clear'd it to her.
 My lady's Indian kinsman, unannounced,
 With half a score of swarthy faces came.
 His own, tho' keen and bold and soldierly,
 Sear'd by the close ecliptic, was not fair ;
 Fairer his talk, a tongue that ruled the hour,
 Tho' seeming boastful : so when first he dash'd
 Into the chronicle of a deedful day,
 Sir Aylmer half forgot his lazy smile
 Of patron, " Good ! my lady's kinsman ! good !"
 My lady with her fingers interlock'd,
 And rotatory thumbs on silken knees,
 Call'd all her vital spirits into each ear
 To listen : unawares they flitted off,
 Bussing themselves about the flowerage
 That stood from out a stiff brocade in which,
 The meteor of a splendid season, she,
 Once with this kinsman, ah so long ago,
 Stept thro' the stately minuet of those days :
 But Edith's eager fancy hurried with him
 Snatch'd thro' the perilous passes of his life :
 Till Leolin, ever watchful of her eye

Hated him with a momentary hate.
Wife-hunting, as the rumor ran, was he :
I know not, for he spoke not, only shower'd
His oriental gifts on every one
And most on Edith : like a storm he came,
And shook the house, and like a storm he went.

Among the gifts he left her (possibly
He flow'd and ebb'd uncertain, to return
When others had been tested) there was one,
A dagger, in rich sheath with jewels on it
Sprinkled about in gold that branch'd itself
Fine as ice-ferns on January panes
Made by a breath. I know not whence at first,
Nor of what race, the work ; but as he told
The story, storming a hill-fort of thieves
He got it ; for their captain after fight,
His comrades having fought their last below,
Was climbing up the valley ; at whom he shot :
Down from the beetling crag to which he clung
Tumbled the tawny rascal at his feet,
This dagger with him, which when now admired
By Edith whom his pleasure was to please,
At once the costly Sahib yielded to her.

And Leolin, coming after he was gone,
Tost over all her presents petulantly :
And when she show'd the wealthy scabbard, saying,
" Look, what a lovely piece of workmanship !"
Slight was his answer, " Well — I care not for it ;"
Then playing with the blade he prick'd his hand.
" A gracious gift to give a lady, this !"
" But would it be more gracious," ask'd the girl,
" Were I to give this gift of his to one
That is no lady ? " " Gracious ? No," said he.
" Me ? — but I cared not for it. O pardon me,
I seem to be ungraciousness itself."
" Take it," she added sweetly, " tho' his gift ;
For I am more ungracious ev'n than you,
I care not for it either ;" and he said,
" Why then I love it ;" but Sir Aylmer past,
And neither loved nor liked the thing he heard.

The next day came a neighbor. Blues and reds
They talk'd of ; blues were sure of it, he thought ;

Then of the latest fox — where started — kill'd
 In such a bottom : " Peter had the brush,
 My Peter, first ; " and did Sir Aylmer know
 That great pock-pitten fellow had been caught ?
 Then made his pleasure echo, hand to hand,
 And rolling as it were the substance of it
 Between his palms a moment up and down —
 " The birds were warm, the birds were warm upon him ;
 We have him now : " and had Sir Aylmer heard —
 Nay, but he must — the land was ringing of it —
 This blacksmith-border marriage — one they knew —
 Raw from the nursery — who could trust a child ?
 That cursed France with her egalities !
 And did Sir Aylmer (deferentially
 With nearing chair and lower'd accent) think —
 For people talk'd — that it was wholly wise
 To let that handsome fellow Averill walk
 So freely with his daughter ? people talk'd —
 The boy might get a notion into him ;
 The girl might be entangled ere she knew.
 Sir Aylmer Aylmer slowly stiffening spoke :
 " The girl and boy, Sir, know their differences ! "
 " Good," said his friend, " but watch ! " and he, " Enough,
 More than enough, Sir ! I can guard my own."
 They parted, and Sir Aylmer Aylmer watch'd.

Pale, for on her the thunders of the house
 Had fallen first, was Edith that same night ;
 Pale as the Jephtha's daughter, a rough piece
 Of early rigid color, under which
 Withdrawing by the counter door to that
 Which Leolin open'd, she cast back upon him
 A piteous glance, and vanish'd. He, as one
 Caught in a burst of unexpected storm,
 And pelted with outrageous epithets,
 Turning beheld the Powers of the House
 On either side of the hearth, indignant ; her,
 Cooling her false cheek with a feather-fan,
 Him glaring, by his own stale devil spurr'd,
 And, like a beast hard-riden, breathing hard.
 " Ungenerous, dishonorable, base,
 Presumptuous ! trusted as he was with her,
 The sole succeder to their wealth, their lands,
 The last remaining pillar of their house,
 The one transmitter of their ancient name,

Their child." "Our child!" "Our heiress!" "Ours!"
for still,

Like echoes from beyond a hollow, came

Her sicklier iteration. Last he said,

"Boy, mark me! for your fortunes are to make.

I swear you shall not make them out of mine.

Now inasmuch as you have practised on her,

Perplexed her, made her half forget herself,

Swerve from her duty to herself and us —

Things in an Aylmer deem'd impossible,

Far as we track ourselves — I say that **this** —

Else I withdraw favor and countenance

From you and yours forever — shall you do.

Sir, when you see her — but you shall not see **her** —

No, you shall write, and not to her, but me :

And you shall say that having spoken with me,

And after look'd into yourself, you find .

That you meant nothing — as indeed you know

That you meant nothing. Such a match as **this** !

Impossible, prodigious!" These were words,

As meted by his measure of himself,

Arguing boundless forbearance: after which,

And Leolin's horror-stricken answer, "I

So foul a traitor to myself and her,

Never, oh never," for about as long

As the wind-hover hangs in balance, paused

Sir Aylmer, reddening from the storm within,

Then broke all bonds of courtesy, and crying,

"Boy, should I find you by my doors again,

My men shall lash you from them like a dog ;

Hence!" with a sudden execration drove

The footstool from before him, and arose ;

So, stammering "scoundrel" out of teeth **that ground**

As in a dreadful dream, while Leolin still

Retreated half-aghast, the fierce old man .

Follow'd, and under his own lintel stood

Storming with lifted hands, a hoary face

Meet for the reverence of the hearth, but now,

Beneath a pale and unimpassion'd moon,

Vext with unworthy madness, and deform'd.

Slowly and conscious of the rageful eye

That watch'd him, till he heard the ponderous **door**

Close, crashing with long echoes thro' the land,

Went Leolin ; then, his passions all in flood

And masters of his motion, furiously
 Down thro' the bright lawns to his brother's ran,
 And foam'd away his heart at Averill's ear :
 Whom Averill solaced as he might, amazed :
 The man was his, had been his father's, friend :
 He must have seen, himself had seen it long ;
 He must have known, himself had known : besides,
 He never yet had set his daughter forth
 Here in the woman-markets of the west,
 Where our Caucasians let themselves be sold.
 Some one, he thought, had slander'd Leolin to him.
 " Brother, for I have loved you more as son
 Than brother, let me tell you : I myself—
 What is their pretty saying ? jilted, is it ?
 Jilted I was : I say it for your peace.
 Pain'd, and, as bearing in myself the shame
 The woman should have borne, humiliated,
 I lived for years a stunted, sunless life ;
 Till after our good parents past away
 Watching your growth, I seem'd again to grow.
 Leolin, I almost sin in envying you :
 The very whitest lamb in all my fold
 Loves you : I know her : the worst thought she has
 Is whiter even than her pretty hand :
 She must prove true : for, brother, where two fight
 The strongest wins, and truth and love are strength.
 And you are happy : let her parents be."

But Leolin cried out the more upon them —
 Insolent, brainless, heartless ! heiress, wealth,
 Their wealth, their heiress ! wealth enough was theirs
 For twenty matches. Were he lord of this,
 Why twenty boys and girls should marry on it,
 And forty blest ones bless him, and himself
 Be wealthy still, ay, wealthier. He believed
 This filthy marriage-hindering Mammon made
 The harlot of the cities : nature crost
 Was mother of the foul adulteries
 That saturate soul with body. Name, too ! name,
 Their ancient name ! they *might* be proud ; its worth
 Was being Edith's. Ah how pale she had look'd,
 Darling, to-night ! they must have rated her
 Beyond all tolerance. These old pheasant-lords,
 These partridge-breeders of a thousand years,
 Who had mildew'd in their thousands, doing nothing

Since Egbert — why, the greater their disgrace!
 Fall back upon a name! rest, rot in that!
 Not *keep* it noble, make it nobler? fools,
 With such a vantage-ground for nobleness!
 He had known a man, a quintessence of man,
 The life of all — who madly loved — and he,
 Thwarted by one of these old father-fools,
 Had rioted his life out, and made an end.
 He would not do it! her sweet face and faith
 Held him from that: but he had powers, he knew it
 Back would he to his studies, make a name,
 Name, fortune too: the world should ring of him
 To shame these mouldy Aylmers in their graves.
 Chancellor, or what is greatest would he be —
 “O brother, I am grieved to learn your grief —
 Give me my fling, and let me say my say.”

At which, like one that sees his own excess,
 And easily forgives it as his own,
 He laugh'd; and then was mute; but presently
 Wept like a storm: and honest Averill seeing
 How low his brother's mood had fallen, fetch'd
 His richest beeswing from a binn reserved
 For banquets, praised the waning red, and tolt
 The vintage — when *this* Aylmer came of age —
 Then drank and past it; till at length the two,
 Tho' Leolin flamed and fell again, agreed
 That much allowance must be made for men.
 After an angry dream this kindlier glow
 Faded with morning, but his purpose held.

Yet once by night again the lovers met,
 A perilous meeting under the tall pines
 That darken'd all the northward of her Hall.
 Him, to her meek and modest bosom prest
 In agony, she promised that no force,
 Persuasion, no, nor death could alter her:
 He, passionately hopefuller, would go,
 Labor for his own Edith, and return
 In such a sunlight of prosperity
 He should not be rejected. “Write to me!
 They loved me, and because I love their child
 They hate me: there is war between us, dear,
 Which breaks all bonds but ours; we must remain
 Sacred to one another.” So they talk'd,

Poor children, for their comfort: the wind blew
 The rain of heaven, and their own bitter tears,
 Tears, and the careless rain of heaven, mixt
 Upon their faces, as they kiss'd each other
 In darkness, and above them roar'd the pine.

So Leolin went; and as we task ourselves
 To learn a language known but smatteringly
 In phrases here and there at random, toil'd
 Mastering the lawless science of our law,
 That codeless myriad of precedent,
 That wilderness of single instances,
 Thro' which a few, by wit or fortune led,
 May beat a pathway out to wealth and fame.
 The jests, that flash'd about the pleader's room,
 Lightning of the hour, the pun, the scurrilous tale, —
 Old scandals buried now seven decades deep
 In other scandals that have lived and died,
 And left the living scandal that shall die —
 Were dead to him already; bent as he was
 To make disproof of scorn, and strong in hopes,
 And prodigal of all brain-labor he,
 Charier of sleep, and wine, and exercise,
 Except when for a breathing-while at eve,
 Some niggard fraction of an hour, he ran
 Beside the river-bank: and then indeed
 Harder the times were, and the hands of power
 Were bloodier, and the according hearts of men
 Seem'd harder too; but the soft river-breeze,
 Which fann'd the gardens of that rival rose
 Yet fragrant in a heart remembering
 His former talks with Edith, on him breathed
 Far purelier in his rushings to and fro,
 After his books, to flush his blood with air,
 Then to his books again. My lady's cousin,
 Half-sickening of his pension'd afternoon,
 Drove in upon the student once or twice,
 Ran a Malayan muck against the times,
 Had golden hopes for France and all mankind,
 Answer'd all queries touching those at home
 With a heaved shoulder and a saucy smile,
 And fain had haled him out into the world,
 And air'd him there: his nearer friend would say,
 "Screw not the chord too sharply lest it snap."
 Then left alone he pluck'd her dagger forth

From where his worldless heart had kept it warm,
 Kissing his vows upon it like a knight.
 And wrinkled benchers often talk'd of him
 Approvingly, and prophesied his rise :
 For heart, I think, help'd head : her letters too,
 Tho' far between, and coming fitfully
 Like broken music, written as she found
 Or made occasion, being strictly watch'd,
 Charm'd him thro' every labyrinth till he saw
 An end, a hope, a light breaking upon him.

But they that cast her spirit into flesh,
 Her worldly-wise begetters, plagued themselves
 To sell her, those good parents, for her good.
 Whatever eldest-born of rank or wealth
 Might lie within their compass, him they lured
 Into their net made pleasant by the baits
 Of gold and beauty, wooing him to woo.
 So month by month the noise about their doors,
 And distant blaze of those dull banquets, made
 The nightly wirer of their innocent hare
 Falter before he took it. All in vain.
 Sullen, defiant, pitying, wroth, return'd
 Leolin's rejected rivals from their suit
 So often, that the folly taking wings
 Slipt o'er those lazy limits down the wind
 With rumor, and became in other fields
 A mockery to the yeoman over ale,
 And laughter to their lords : but those at home,
 As hunters round a hunted creature draw
 The cordon close and closer toward the death,
 Narrow'd her goings out and comings in ;
 Forbade her first the house of Averill,
 Then closed her access to the wealthier farms,
 Last from her own home-circle of the poor
 They barr'd her : yet she bore it : yet her cheek
 Kept color : wondrous ! but, O mystery !
 What amulet drew her down to that old oak,
 So old, that twenty years before, a part
 Falling had let appear the brand of John —
 Once grovelike, each huge arm a tree, but now
 The broken base of a black tower, a cave
 Of touchwood, with a single flourishing spray.
 There the manorial lord too curiously
 Raking in that millennial touchwood-dust

Found for himself a bitter treasure-trove ;
 Burst his own wyvern on the seal, and read
 Writhing a letter from his child, for which
 Came at the moment Leolin's emissary,
 A crippled lad, and coming turn'd to fly,
 But scared with threats of jail and halter gave
 'To him that fluster'd his poor parish wits
 The letter which he brought, and swore besides
 To play their go-between as heretofore
 Nor let them know themselves betray'd ; and then
 Soul-stricken at their kindness to him, went
 Hating his own lean heart and miserable.

Thenceforward oft from out a despot dream
 The father panting woke, and oft, as dawn
 Aroused the black republic on his elms,
 Sweeping the frothfly from the fescue brush'd
 Thro' the dim meadow toward his treasure-trove,
 Seized it, took home, and to my lady, — who made
 A downward crescent of her minion mouth,
 Listless in all despondence, — read ; and tore,
 As if the living passion symbol'd there
 Were living nerves to feel the rent ; and burnt,
 Now chafing at his own great self defied,
 Now striking on huge stumbling-blocks of scorn
 In babyisms, and dear diminutives
 Scattered all over the vocabulary
 Of such a love as like a chidden child,
 After much wailing, hush'd itself at last
 Hopeless of answer : then tho' Averill wrote
 And bade him with good heart sustain himself —
 All would be well — the lover heeded not,
 But passionately restless came and went,
 And rustling once at night about the place,
 There by a keeper shot at, slightly hurt,
 Raging return'd : nor was it well for her
 Kept to the garden now, and grove of pines,
 Watch'd even there ; and one was set to watch
 The watcher, and Sir Aylmer watch'd them all,
 Yet bitterer from his readings : once indeed,
 Warm'd with his wines, or taking pride in her,
 She look'd so sweet, he kiss'd her tenderly,
 Not knowing what possess'd him : that one kiss
 Was Leolin's one strong rival upon earth ;
 Seconded, for my lady follow'd suit,

Seem'd hope's returning rose : and then ensued
 A martin's summer of his faded love,
 Or ordeal by kindness ; after this
 He seldom crost his child without a sneer ;
 The mother flow'd in shallower acrimonies :
 Never one kindly smile, one kindly word :
 So that the gentle creature shut from all
 Her charitable use, and face to face
 With twenty months of silence, slowly lost,
 Nor greatly cared to lose, her hold on life.
 Last, some low fever ranging round to spy
 The weakness of a people or a house,
 Like flies that haunt a wound, or deer, or men,
 Or almost all that is, hurting the hurt —
 Save Christ as we believe him — found the girl
 And flung her down upon a couch of fire,
 Where careless of the household faces near,
 And crying upon the name of Leolin,
 She, and with her the race of Aylmer, past.

Star to star vibrates light : may soul to soul
 Strike thro' a finer element of her own ?
 So, — from afar, — touch as at once ? or why
 That night, that moment, when she named his name,
 Did the keen shriek, " Yes, love, yes, Edith, yes,"
 Shrink, till the comrade of his chambers woke,
 And came upon him half-arisen from sleep,
 With a weird bright eye, sweating and trembling,
 His hair as it were crackling into flames,
 His body half flung forward in pursuit,
 And his long arms stretch'd as to grasp a flyer :
 Nor knew he wherefore he had made the cry ;
 And being much befooled and idioted
 By the rough amity of the other, sank
 As into sleep again. The second day,
 My lady's Indian kinsman rushing in,
 A breaker of the bitter news from home,
 Found a dead man, a letter edged with death
 Beside him, and the dagger which himself
 Gave Edith, reddened with no bandit's blood :
 " From Edith " was engraven on the blade.

Then Averil went and gazed upon his death.
 And when he came again, his flock believed —
 Beholding how the years which are not Time's

Had blasted him — that many thousand days
 Were clipt by horror from his term of life.
 Yet the sad mother, for the second death
 Scarce touch'd her thro' that nearness of the first,
 And being used to find her pastor texts,
 Sent to the harrow'd brother, praying him
 To speak before the people of her child,
 And fixt the Sabbath. Darkly that day rose:
 Autumn's mock-sunshine of the faded woods
 Was all the life of it; for hard on these,
 A breathless burden of low-folded heavens
 Stifled and chill'd at once: but every roof
 Sent out a listener: many too had known
 Edith among the hamlets round, and since
 The parents' harshness and the hapless loves
 And double death were widely murmur'd, left
 Their own gray tower, or plain-faced tabernacle,
 To hear him; all in mourning these, and those
 With blots of it about them, ribbon, glove,
 Or kerchief; while the church, — one night, except
 For greenish glimmerings thro' the lancets, — made
 Still paler the pale head of him, who tower'd
 Above them, with his hopes in either grave.

Long o'er his bent brows linger'd Averill,
 His face magnetic to the hand from which
 Livid he pluck'd it forth, and labor'd thro'
 His brief prayer-prelude, gave the verse, "Behold,
 Your house is left unto you desolate!"
 But lapsed into so long a pause again
 As half amazed, half frightened all his flock:
 Then from his height and loneliness of grief
 Bore down in flood, and dash'd his angry heart
 Against the desolations of the world.

Never since our bad earth became one sea,
 Which rolling o'er the palaces of the proud,
 And all but those who knew the living God —
 Eight that were left to make a prur world —
 When since had flood, fire, earthquake, thunder, wrought
 Such waste and havoc as the idolatries,
 Which from the low light of mortality
 Shot up their shadows to the Heaven of Heavens,
 And worshipt their own darkness as the Highest?
 "Gash thyself, priest, and honor thy brute Baäl

And to thy worst self sacrifice thyself,
For with thy worst self hast thou clothed thy God.
Then came a Lord in no wise like to Baäl.
The babe shall lead the lion. Surely now
The wilderness shall blossom as the rose.
Crown thyself, worm, and worship thine own lusts! —
No coarse and blockish God of acreage
Stands at thy gate for thee to grovel to —
Thy God is far diffused in noble groves
And princely halls, and farms, and flowing lawns,
And heaps of living gold that daily grow,
And title-scrolls and gorgeous heraldries.
In such a shape dost thou behold thy God.
Thou wilt not gash thy flesh for *him*; for thine
Fares richly, in fine linen, not a hair
Ruffled upon the scarfskin, even while
The deathless ruler of thy dying house
Is wounded to the death that cannot die;
And tho' thou numberest with the followers
Of One who cried, "Leave all and follow me."
Thee therefore with His light about thy feet,
Thee with His message ringing in thine ears,
Thee shall thy brother man, the Lord from Heaven,
Born of a village girl, carpenter's son,
Wonderful, Prince of Peace, the Mighty God,
Count the more base idolater of the two;
Crueller: as not passing thro' the fire
Bodies, but souls — thy children's — thro' the smoke,
The blight of low desires — darkening thine own
To thine own likeness; or if one of these,
Thy better born unhappily from thee,
Should, as by miracle, grow straight and fair —
Friends, I was bid to speak of such a one
By those who most have cause to sorrow for her —
Fairer than Rachel by the palmy well,
Fairer than Ruth among the fields of corn,
Fair as the angel that said, "Hail," she seem'd,
Who entering fill'd the house with sudden light.
For so mine own was brighten'd: where indeed
The roof so lowly but that beam of heaven
Dawn'd sometime thro' the doorway? whose the babe
Too ragged to be fondled on her lap,
Warm'd at her bosom? The poor child of shame,
The common care whom no one cared for, leapt
To greet her, wasting his forgotten heart,

As with the mother he had never known,
 In gambols; for her fresh and innocent eyes
 Had such a star of morning in their blue,
 That all neglected places of the field
 Broke into Nature's music when they saw her.
 Low was her voice, but won mysterious way
 Thro' the seal'd ear to which a louder one
 Was all but silence — free of alms her hand —
 The hand that robed your cottage-walls with flowers
 Has often toil'd to clothe your little ones;
 How often placed upon the sick man's brow
 Cool'd it, or laid his feverous pillow smooth!
 Had you one sorrow and she shared it not?
 One burden and she would not lighten it?
 One spiritual doubt she did not soothe?
 Or when some heat of difference sparkled out,
 How sweetly would she glide between your wraths,
 And steal you from each other! for she walk'd
 Wearing the light yoke of that Lord of love,
 Who still'd the rolling wave of Galilee!
 And one — of him I was not bid to speak —
 Was always with her, whom you also knew.
 Him too you loved, for he was worthy love.
 And these had been together from the first;
 They might have been together till the last.
 Friends, this frail bark of ours, when sorely tried,
 May wreck itself without the pilot's guilt,
 Without the captain's knowledge: hope with me.
 Whose shame is that, if he went hence with shame?
 Nor mine the fault, if losing both of these
 I cry to vacant chairs and widow'd walls,
 'My house is left unto me desolate.'

While thus he spoke, his hearers wept; but some
 Sons of the glebe, with other frowns than those
 That knit themselves for summer shadow, scowl'd
 At their great lord. He, when it seem'd he saw
 No pale sheet-lightnings from afar, but fork'd
 Of the near storm, and aiming at his head,
 Sat anger-charm'd from sorrow, soldierlike,
 Erect: but when the preacher's cadence flow'd
 Softening thro' all the gentle attributes
 Of his lost child, the wife, who watch'd his face.
 Paled at a sudden twitch of his iron mouth;
 And "O pray God that he hold up," she thought,

"Nor yours the blame — for who beside your hearth
 Can take her place — if echoing me ycu cry,
 'Our house is left unto us desolate?'
 But thou, O thou that killest, had'st thou known,
 O thou that stonest, had'st thou understood
 The things belonging to thy peace and ours!
 Is there no prophet but the voice that calls
 Doom upon kings, or in the waste, 'Repent'?
 Is not our own child on the narrow way,
 Who down to those that saunter in the broad,
 Cries, 'Come up hither,' as a prophet to us?
 Is there no stoning save with flint and rock?
 Yes, as the dead we weep for testify —
 No desolation but by sword and fire?
 Yes, as your moanings witness, and myself
 Am lonelier, darker, earthlier for my loss.
 Give me your prayers, for he is past your prayers,
 Not past the living fount of pity in Heaven.
 But I that thought myself long-suffering, meek,
 Exceeding 'poor in spirit' — how the words
 Have twisted back upon themselves, and mean
 Vileness, we are grown so proud — I wish'd my voice
 A rushing tempest of the wrath of God
 To blow these sacrifices thro' the world —
 Sent like the twelve-divided concubine
 To inflame the tribes: but there — out yonder — earth
 Lightens from her own central Hell — O there
 The red fruit of an old idolatry —
 The heads of chiefs and princes fall so fast,
 They cling together in the ghastly sack —
 The land all shambles — naked marriages
 Flash from the bridge, and ever-murder'd France,
 By shores that darken with the gathering wolf,
 Runs in a river of blood to the sick sea.
 Is this a time to madden madness then?
 Was this a time for these to flaunt their pride?
 May Pharaoh's darkness, folds as dense as those
 Which hid the Holiest from the people's eyes
 Ere the great death, shroud this great sin from all!
 Doubtless our narrow world must canvass it:
 O rather pray for those and pity them,
 Who thro' their own desire accomplish'd bring
 Their own gray hairs with sorrow to the grave —
 Who broke the bond which they desired to break,
 Which else had link'd their race with times to come —

Who wove coarse webs to snare her purity,
 Grossly contriving their dear daughter's good —
 Poor souls, and knew not what they did, but sat
 Ignorant, devising their own daughter's death!
 May not that earthly chastisement suffice?
 Have not our love and reverence left them bare?
 Will not another take their heritage?
 Will there be children's laughter in their hall
 Forever and forever, or one stone
 Left on another, or is it a light thing
 That I their guest, their host, their ancient friend,
 I made by these the last of all my race
 Must cry to these the last of theirs, as cried
 Christ ere His agony to those that swore
 Not by the temple but the gold, and made
 Their own traditions God, and slew the Lord,
 And left their memories a world's curse — 'Behold,
 Your house is left unto you desolate'?"

Ended he had not, but she brook'd no more:
 Long since her heart had beat remorselessly,
 Her cramp't-up sorrow pain'd her, and a sense
 Of meanness in her unresisting life.
 Then their eyes vext her; for on entering
 He had cast the curtains of their seat aside —
 Black velvet of the costliest — she herself
 Had seen to that: fain had she closed them **now**,
 Yet dared not stir to do it, only near'd
 Her husband inch by inch, but when she laid,
 Wifelike, her hand in one of his, he veil'd
 His face with the other, and at once, as falls
 A creeper when the prop is broken, fell
 The woman shrieking at his feet, and swoon'd.
 Then her own people bore along the nave
 Her pendent hands, and narrow meagre face
 Seam'd with the shallow cares of fifty years:
 And her the Lord of all the landscape round
 Ev'n to its last horizon, and of all
 Who peer'd at him so keenly, follow'd out
 Tall and erect, but in the middle aisle
 Reel'd as a footsore ox in crowd'd ways
 Stumbling across the market to his death,
 Unpitied; for he groped as blind, and seem'd
 Always about to fall, grasping the pews
 And oaken finials till he touch'd the door,

Yet to the lychgate, where his chariot stood,
Strode from the porch, tall and erect again.

But nevermore did either pass the gate
Save under pall with bearers. In one month,
Thro' weary and yet ever wearier hours,
The childless mother went to seek her child;
And when he felt the silence of his house
About him, and the change and not the change,
And those fixt eyes of painted ancestors
Staring forever from their gilded walls
On him their last descendant, his own head
Began to droop, to fall; the man became
Imbecile; his one word was "desolate;"
Dead for two years before his death was he;
But when the second Christmas came, escaped
His keepers, and the silence which he felt,
To find a deeper in the narrow gloom
By wife and child; nor wanted at his end
The dark retinue reverencing death
At golden thresholds; nor from tender hearts,
And those who sorrow'd o'er a vanish'd race,
Pity, the violet on the tyrant's grave.
Then the great Hall was wholly broken down,
And the broad woodland parcell'd into farms;
And where the two contrived their daughter's good,
Lies the hawk's cast, the mole has made his run,
The hedgehog underneath the plantain bores,
The rabbit fondles his own harmless face,
The slow-worm creeps, and the thin weasel there
Follows the mouse, and all is open field.

SEA DREAMS.

A CITY clerk, but gently born and bred;
His wife, an unknown artist's orphan child —
One babe was theirs, a Margaret, three years old:
They, thinking that her clear germander eye
Droopt in the giant-factoried city-gloom,
Came, with a month's leave given them, to the sea:
For which his gains were dock'd, however small:
Small were his gains, and hard his work; besides,
Their slender household fortunes (for the man
Had risk'd his little) like the little thrift,

Trembled in perilous places o'er a deep :
And oft, when sitting all alone, his face
Would darken, as he cursed his credulousness,
And that one unctuous mouth which lured him, rogue,
To buy strange shares in some Peruvian mine.
Now seaward-bound for health they gain'd a coast,
All sand and cliff and deep-inrunning cave,
At close of day ; slept, woke, and went the next,
The Sabbath, pious variers from the church,
To chapel ; where a heated pulpiteer,
Not preaching simple Christ to simple men,
Announced the coming doom, and fulminated
Against the scarlet woman and her creed :
For sideways up he swung his arms, and shriek'd,
" Thus, thus with violence," ev'n as if he held
The Apocalyptic millstone, and himself
Were that great Angel ; " thus with violence
Shall Babylon be cast into the sea ;
Then comes the close." The gentle-hearted wife
Sat shuddering at the ruin of a world ;
He at his own : but when the wordy storm
Had ended, forth they came and paced the shore,
Ran in and out the long sea-framing caves,
Drank the large air, and saw, but scarce believed
(The sootflake of so many a summer still
Clung to their fancies) that they saw, the sea.
So now on sand they walk'd, and now on cliff,
Lingering about the thymy promontories,
Till all the sails were darken'd in the west,
And rosed in the east : then homeward and to bed :
Where she, who kept a tender Christian hope
Haunting a holy text, and still to that
Returning, as the bird returns, at night,
" Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,"
Said, " Love, forgive him " : but he did not speak ;
And silenced by that silence lay the wife,
Remembering her dear Lord who died for all,
And musing on the little lives of men,
And how they mar this little by their feuds.

But while the two were sleeping, a full tide
Rose with ground-swell, which, on the foremost rocks
Touching, upjetted in spirits of wild sea-smoke,
And scaled in sheets of wasteful foam, and fell
In vast sea-cataracts — ever and anon

Dead claps of thunder from within the cliffs
 Heard thro' the living roar. At this the babe,
 Their Margaret, cradled near them, wail'd and woke
 The mother, and the father suddenly cried,
 "A wreck, a wreck!" then turn'd, and groaning, said,

"Forgive! How many will say 'forgive,' and find
 A sort of absolution in the sound
 To hate a little longer! No; the sin
 That neither God nor man can well forgive,
 Hypocrisy, I saw it in him at once.
 Is it so true that second thoughts are best?
 Not first, and third, which are a riper first?
 Too ripe, too late! they come too late for use.
 Ah, love, there surely lives in man and beast
 Something divine to warn them of their foes:
 And such a sense, when first I fronted him,
 Said, 'Trust him not;' but after, when I came
 To know him more, I lost it, knew him less;
 Fought with what seem'd my own uncharity;
 Sat at his table; drank his costly wines;
 Made more and more allowance for his talk;
 Went further, fool! and trusted him with all,
 All my poor scrapings from a dozen years
 Of dust and deskwork: there is no such mine,
 None; but a gulf of ruin, swallowing gold,
 Not making. Ruin'd! ruin'd! the sea roars
 Ruin: a fearful night!"

"Not fearful; fair,"
 Said the good wife, "if every star in heaven
 Can make it fair: you do but hear the tide.
 Had you ill dreams?"

"O yes," he said, "I dream'd
 Of such a tide swelling toward the land,
 And I from out the boundless outer deep
 Swept with it to the shore, and enter'd one
 Of those dark caves that run beneath the cliffs.
 I thought the motion of the boundless deep
 Bore through the cave, and I was heaved upon it
 In darkness: then I saw one lovely star
 Larger and larger. 'What a world,' I thought,
 'To live in!' but in moving on I found
 Only the landward exit of the cave,

Bright with the sun upon the stream beyond :
 And near the light a giant woman sat,
 All over earthy, like a piece of earth,
 A pickaxe in her hand : then out I slipt
 Into a land all sun and blossom, trees
As high as heaven, and every bird that sings :
 And here the night-light flickering in my eyes
 Awoke me."

"That was then your dream," she said,
 "Not sad, but sweet."

"So sweet, I lay," said he,
 "And mused upon it, drifting up the stream
 In fancy, till I slept again, and pieced
 The broken vision ; for I dream'd that still
 The motion of the great deep bore me on,
 And that the woman walk'd upon the brink :
 I wonder'd at her strength, and ask'd her of it :
 'It came,' she said, 'by working in the mines :'
 O then to ask her of my shares, I thought ;
 And ask'd ; but not a word ; she shook her head.
 And then the motion of the current ceased,
 And there was rolling thunder ; and we reach'd
 A mountain, like a wall of burs and thorns ;
 But she with her strong feet up the steep hill
 Trod out a path : I follow'd ; and at top
 She pointed seaward : there a fleet of glass,
 That seem'd a fleet of jewels under me,
 Sailing along before a gloomy cloud
 That not one moment ceased to thunder, past
 In sunshine : right across its track there lay,
 Down in the water, a long reef of gold,
 Or what seem'd gold : and I was glad at first
 To think that in our often-ransack'd world
 Still so much gold was left ; and then I fear'd
 Lest the gay navy there should splinter on it,
 And fearing waved my arm to warn them off ;
 An idle signal, for the brittle fleet
 (I thought I could have died to save it) near'd,
 Touch'd, clink'd, and clash'd, and vanish'd, and I woke,
 I heard the clash so clearly. Now I see
 My dream was Life ; the woman honest Work ;
 And my poor venture but a fleet of glass
 Wreck'd on a reef of visionary gold."

“Nay,” said the kindly wife to comfort him,
 “You raised your arm, you tumbled down and broke
 The glass with little Margaret’s medicine in it;
 And, breaking that, you made and broke your dream:
 A trifle makes a dream, a trifle breaks.”

“No trifle,” groan’d the husband; “yesterday
 I met him suddenly in the street, and ask’d
 That which I ask’d the woman in my dream.
 Like her, he shook his head. ‘Show me the books.
 He dodged me with a long and loose account.
 ‘The books, the books!’ but he, he could not wait,
 Bound on a matter he of life and death:
 When the great Books (see Daniel seven and ten)
 Were open’d, I should find he meant me well;
 And then began to bloat himself, and ooze
 All over with the fat affectionate smile
 That makes the widow lean. ‘My dearest friend,
 Have faith, have faith! We live by faith,’ said he;
 ‘And all things work together for the good
 Of those’ — it makes me sick to quote him — last
 Gript my hand hard, and with God-bless-you went.
 I stood like one that had received a blow:
 I found a hard friend in his loose accounts,
 A loose one in the hard grip of his hand,
 A curse in his God-bless-you: then my eyes
 Pursued him down the street, and far away,
 Among the honest shoulders of the crowd,
 Read rascal in the motions of his back,
 And scoundrel in the supple-sliding knee.”

“Was he so bound, poor soul?” said the good wife;
 “So are we all: but do not call him, love,
 Before you prove him, rogue, and proved, forgive.
 His gain is loss; for he that wrongs his friend
 Wrongs himself more, and ever bears about
 A silent court of justice in his breast,
 Himself the judge and jury, and himself
 The prisoner at the bar, ever condemn’d:
 And that drags down his life: then comes what comes
 Hereafter: and he meant, he said he meant,
 Perhaps he meant, or partly meant, you well.”

“‘With all his conscience and one eye askew’ —
 Love, let me quote these lines, that you may learn

A man is likewise counsel for himself,
 Too often, in that silent court of yours —
 ' With all his conscience and one eye askew,
 So false, he partly took himself for true;
 Whose pious talk, when most his heart was dry,
 Made wet the crafty crowsfoot round his eye;
 Who, never naming God except for gain,
 So never took that useful name in vain;
 Made Him his catspaw and the Cross his tool,
 And Christ the bait to trap his dupe and fool;
 Nor deeds of gift, but gifts of grace he forged,
 And snakelike slimed his victim ere he gorged;
 And oft at Bible-meetings, o'er the rest
 Arising, did his holy, oily best,
 Dropping the too rough H in Hell and Heaven,
 To spread the Word by which himself had thriven.
 How like you this old satire?"

"Nay," she said,
 "I loathe it: he had never kindly heart,
 Nor ever cared to better his own kind,
 Who first wrote satire, with no pity in it.
 But will you hear *my* dream, for I had one
 That altogether went to music? Still
 It awed me."

Then she told it, having dream'd
 Of that same coast.

— But round the North, a light,
 A belt, it seem'd, of luminous vapor, lay,
 And ever in it a low musical note
 Swell'd up and died; and, as it swell'd, a ridge
 Of breaker issued from the belt, and still
 Grew with the growing note, and when the note
 Had reach'd a thunderous fulness, on those cliffs
 Broke, mixt with awful light (the same as that
 Living within the belt) whereby she saw
 That all those lines of cliffs were cliffs no more,
 But huge cathedral-fronts of every age,
 Grave, florid, stern, as far as eye could see,
 One after one: and then the great ridge drew,
 Lessening to the lessening music, back,
 And past into the belt and swell'd again
 Slowly to music. ever when it broke,

The statues, king or saint, or founder, fell;
 Then from the gaps and chasms of ruin left
 Came men and women in dark clusters round,
 Some crying, "Set them up! they shall not fall!"
 And others, "Let them lie, for they have fall'n."
 And still they strove and wrangled: and she grieved
 In her strange dream, she knew not why, to find
 Their wildest wailings never out of tune
 With that sweet note; and ever as their shrieks
 Ran highest up the gamut, that great wave
 Returning, while none mark'd it, on the crowd
 Broke, mixt with awful light, and show'd their eyes
 Glaring, and passionate looks, and swept away
 The men of flesh and blood, and men of stone,
 To the waste deeps together.

"Then I fixt

My wistful eyes on two fair images,
 Both crown'd with stars and high among the stars, —
 The Virgin Mother standing with her child
 High up on one of those dark minster-fronts —
 Till she began to totter, and the child
 Clung to the mother, and sent out a cry
 Which mixt with little Margaret's, and I woke,
 And my dream awed me: — well — but what are dreams?
 Yours came but from the breaking of a glass,
 And mine but from the crying of a child."

"Child? No!" said he, "but this tide's roar, and his,
 Our Boanerges, with his threats of doom,
 And loud-lung'd Antibabylonianisms
 (Altho' I grant but little music there)
 Went both to make your dream: but if there were
 A music harmonizing our wild cries,
 Sphere-music such as that you dream'd about,
 Why, that would make our passions far too like
 The discords dear to the musician. No —
 One shriek of hate would jar all the hymns of heaven:
 True Devils with no ear, they howl in tune
 With nothing but the Devil!"

"‘True,’ indeed!

One of our town, but later by an hour
 Here than ourselves, spoke with me on the shore;
 While you were running down the sands, and made

The dimpled flounce of the sea-furbelow flap,
 Good man, to please the child. She brought strange news
 Why were you silent when I spoke to-night?
 I had set my heart on your forgiving him
 Before you knew. We *must* forgive the dead."

"Dead! who is dead?"

"The man your eye pursued.
 A little after you had parted with him,
 He suddenly dropt dead of heart-disease."

"Dead? he? of heart-disease? what heart had he
 To die of? dead!"

"Ah, dearest, if there be
 A devil in man, there is an angel too,
 And if he did that wrong you charge him with,
 His angel broke his heart. But your rough voice
 (You spoke so loud) has roused the child again.
 Sleep, little birdie, sleep! will she not sleep
 Without her 'little birdie?' well then, sleep,
 And I will sing you 'birdie.'"

Saying this,
 The woman half turn'd round from him she loved,
 Left him one hand, and reaching thro' the night
 Her other, found (for it was close beside)
 And half embraced the basket cradle-head
 With one soft arm, which, like the pliant bough
 That moving moves the nest and nestling, sway'd
 The cradle, while she sang this baby-song.

What does little birdie say
 In her nest at peep of day?
 Let me fly, says little birdie,
 Mother, let me fly away.
 Birdie, rest a little longer,
 Till the little wings are stronger.
 So she rests a little longer,
 Then she flies away.

What does little baby say,
 In her bed at peep of day?
 Baby says, like little birdie,

Baby, sleep a little longer,
Till the little limbs are stronger.
If she sleeps a little longer,
Baby too shall fly away.

“She sleeps : let us too, let all evil, sleep.
He also sleeps — another sleep than ours.
He can do no more wrong : forgive him, dear,
And I shall sleep the sounder !”

Then the man,
“His deeds yet live, the worst is yet to come.
Yet let your sleep for this one night be sound :
I do forgive him !”

“Thanks, my love,” she said,
“Your own will be the sweeter,” and they slept.

THE GRANDMOTHER.

I.

AND Willy, my eldest-born, is gone, you say, little Annie ?
Ruddy and white, and strong on his legs, he looks like a
man.

And Willy's wife has written : she never was overwise,
Never the wife for Willy : he would n't take my advice.

II.

For, Annie, you see, her father was not the man to save,
Had n't a head to manage, and drank himself into his grave.
Pretty enough, very pretty ! but I was against it for one.
Eh ! — but he would n't hear me — and Willy, you say, is
gone.

III.

Willy, my beauty, my eldest-born, the flower of the flock ;
Never a man could fling him : for Willy stood like a rock.
“Here's a leg for a babe of a week !” says doctor ; and he
would be bound,
There was not his like that year in twenty parishes round.

IV.

Strong on his hands, and strong on his legs, but still of his
tongue!

I ought to have gone before him: I wonder he went so
young

I cannot cry for him, Annie: I have not long to stay;
Perhaps I shall see him the sooner, for he lived far away.

V.

Why do you look at me, Annie? you think I am hard and
cold;

But all my children have gone before me, I am so old:
I cannot weep for Willy, nor can I weep for the rest;
Only at your age, Annie, I could have wept with the best.

VI.

For I remember a quarrel I had with your father, my dear,
All for a slanderous story, that cost me many a tear.

I mean your grandfather, Annie: it cost me a world of woe,
Seventy years ago, my darling. seventy years ago.

VII.

For Jenny, my cousin, had come to the place, and I knew
right well

That Jenny had tript in her time: I knew, but I would not
tell.

And she to be coming and slandering me, the base little
liar!

But the tongue is a fire, as you know, my dear, the tongue
is a fire.

VIII.

And the parson made it his text that week, and he said
likewise,

That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies,
That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with
outright,

But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight.

IX.

And Willy had not been down to the farm for a week and
a day;

And all things look'd half dead, tho' it was the middle of
May.

Jenny, to slander me, who knew what Jenny had been!
But soiling another, Annie, will never make oneself clean.

X.

And I cried myself wellnigh blind, and all of an evening
late

I clim'd to the top of the garth, and stood by the road at
the gate.

The moon like a rick on fire was rising over the dale,
And whit, whit, whit, in the bush beside me chirrupt the
nightingale.

XI.

All of a sudden he stopt: there past by the gate of the
farm,

Willy, — he did n't see me, — and Jenny hung on his arm.
Out into the road I started, and spoke I scarce knew how;
Ah, there's no fool like the old one — it makes me angry
now.

XII.

Willy stood up like a man, and look'd the thing that he
meant;

Jenny, the viper, made me a mocking courtsey and went.

And I said, "Let us part: in a hundred years it'll all be
the same,

You cannot love me at all, if you love not my good name."

XIII.

And he turn'd, and I saw his eyes all wet, in the sweet
moonshine:

"Sweetheart, I love you so well that your good name is
mine.

And what do I care for Jane, let her speak of you well or ill;
But marry me out of hand: we two shall be happy still."

XIV.

"Marry you, Willy!" said I, "but I needs must speak my
mind,

And I fear you'll listen to tales, be jealous and hard and
unkind."

But he turn'd and claspt me in his arms, and answer'd,
"No, love, no;"

Seventy years ago, my darling, seventy years ago.

XV.

So Willy and I were wedded: I wore a lilac gown;

And the ringers rang with a will, and he gave the ringers
a crown.

But the first that ever I bare was dead before he was born,

XVI.

That was the first time, too, that ever I thought of death.
There lay the sweet little body that never had drawn a
breath.

I had not wept, little Annie, not since I had been a wife ;
But I wept like a child that day, for the babe had fought
for his life:

XVII.

His dear little face was troubled, as if with anger or pain :
I look'd at the still little body — his trouble had all been in
vain.

For Willy I cannot weep, I shall see him another morn :
But I wept like a child for the child that was dead before
he was born.

XVIII.

But he cheer'd me, my good man, for he seldom said me
nay :

Kind, like a man, was he ; like a man, too, would have his
way :

Never jealous — not he : we had many a happy year ;
And he died, and I could not weep — my own time seem'd
so near.

XIX.

But I wish'd it had been God's will that I, too, then could
have died :

I began to be tired a little, and fain had slept at his side.
And that was ten years back, or more, if I don't forget :
But as to the children, Annie, they're all about me yet.

XX.

Pattering over the boards, my Annie who left me at two,
Patter she goes, my own little Annie, an Annie like you :
Pattering over the boards, she comes and goes at her will,
While Harry is in the five-acre and Charlie ploughing the
hill.

XXI.

And Harry and Charlie, I hear them too — they sing to
their team :

Often they come to the door in a pleasant kind of a dream.
They come and sit by my chair, they hover about my bed —
I am not always certain if they be alive or dead.

XXII.

And yet I know for a truth, there's none of them left alive
For Harry went at sixty, your father at sixty-five :

And Willy, my eldest-born, at nigh threescore and ten ;
I knew them all as babies, and now they 're elderly men.

XXIII.

For mine is a time of peace, it is not often I grieve ;
I am oftener sitting at home in my father's farm at eve :
And the neighbors come and laugh and gossip, and so do I
I find myself often laughing at things that have long gone
by.

XXIV.

To be sure the preacher says, our sins should make us sad :
But mine is a time of peace, and there is Grace to be had ;
And God, not man, is the Judge of us all when life shall
cease ;
And in this Book, little Annie, the message is one of Peace.

XXV.

And age is a time of peace, so it be free from pain,
And happy has been my life ; but I would not live it again.
I seem to be tired a little, that 's all, and long for rest ;
Only at your age, Annie, I could have wept with the best.

XXVI.

So Willy has gone, my beauty, my eldest-born, my flower ;
But how can I weep for Willy, he has but gone for an hour, —
Gone for a minute, my son, from this room into the next ;
I, too, shall go in a minute. What time have I to be vexed ?

XXVII.

And Willy's wife has written, she never was overwise.
Get me my glasses, Annie : thank God that I keep my eyes.
There is but a wife left you, when I shall have past away.
But stay with the old woman now : you cannot have long
to stay.

TITHONUS.

THE woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
 The vapors weep their burden to the ground,
 Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
 And after many a summer dies the swan.
 Me only cruel immortality
 Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,
 Here at the quiet limit of the world,
 A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream
 The ever silent spaces of the East,
 Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

Alas! for this gray shadow, once a man —
 So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,
 Who madest him thy chosen, that he seem'd
 To his great heart none other than a God!
 I ask'd thee, "Give me immortality."
 Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,
 Like wealthy men who care not how they give.
 But thy strong Hours indignant work'd their wills,
 And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me,
 And tho' they could not end me, left me maim'd
 To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
 Immortal age beside immortal youth,
 And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,
 Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,
 Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,
 Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears
 To hear me? Let me go: take back thy gift:
 Why should a man desire in any way
 To vary from the kindly race of men
 Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
 Where all should pause, as is most meet for all:

A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes
 A glimpse of that dark world where I was born.
 Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals
 From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,
 And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.

Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the gloom,
Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,
Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team
Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise,
And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.

Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful
In silence, then before thine answer given
Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,
And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,
In days far off, on that dark earth, be true? —
“The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts.”

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
In days far off, and with what other eyes
I used to watch — if I be he that watch'd —
The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood
Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all
Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,
Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm
With kisses balmier than half-openings buds
Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd
Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,
Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not forever in thine East:
How can my nature longer mix with thine?
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam
Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
Of happy men that have the power to die,
And grassy barrows of the happier dead.
Release me, and restore me to the ground;
Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave:
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn;
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

THE VOYAGE.

I.

WE left behind the painted buoy
That tosses at the harbor-mouth ;
And madly danced our hearts with joy,
As fast we fled to the South :
How fresh was every sight and sound
On open main or winding shore !
We knew the merry world was round,
And we might sail for evermore.

II.

Warm broke the breeze against the brow,
Dry sang the tackle, sang the sail :
The Lady's-head upon the prow
Caught the shrill salt, and sheer'd the gale.
The broad seas swell'd to meet the keel,
And swept behind : so quick the run,
We felt the good ship shake and reel,
We seem'd to sail into the Sun !

III.

How oft we saw the Sun retire,
And burn the threshold of the night,
Fall from his Ocean-lane of fire,
And sleep beneath his pillar'd light !
How oft the purple-skirted robe
Of twilight slowly downward drawn,
As thro' the slumber of the globe
Again we dash'd into the dawn !

IV.

New stars all night above the brim
Of waters lighten'd into view ;
They climb'd as quickly, for the rim
Changed every moment as we flew.
Far ran the naked moon across
The houseless ocean's heaving field,
Or flying shone, the silver boss
Of her own halo's dusky shield ;

V.

The peaky islet shifted shapes,
 High towns on hills were dimly seen,
 We past long lines of Northern capes
 And dewy Northern meadows green.
 We came to warmer waves, and deep
 Across the boundless East we drove,
 Where those long swells of breaker sweep
 The nutmeg rocks and isles of clove.

VI.

By peaks that flamed, or, all in shade,
 Gloom'd the low coast and quivering brine
 With ashy rains, that spreading made
 Fantastic plume or sable pine ;
 By sands and steaming flats, and floods
 Of mighty mouth, we scudded fast,
 And hills and scarlet-mingled woods
 Glow'd for a moment as we past.

VII.

O hundred shores of happy climes,
 How swiftly stream'd ye by the bark !
 At times the whole sea burn'd, at times
 With wakes of fire we tore the dark ;
 At times a carven craft would shoot
 From havens hid in fairy bowers,
 With naked limbs and flowers and fruit,
 But we nor paused for fruit nor flowers.

VIII.

For one fair Vision ever fled
 Down the waste waters day and night,
 And still we follow'd where she led,
 In hope to gain upon her flight.
 Her face was evermore unseen,
 And fixt upon the far sea-line ;
 But each man murmur'd, " O my Queen,
 I follow till I make thee mine."

IX.

And now we lost her, now she gleam'd
 Like Fancy made of golden air,
 Now nearer to the prow she seem'd
 Like Virtue firm, like Knowledge fair,
 Now high on waves that idly burst
 Like Heavenly Hope she crown'd the sea,
 And now, the bloodless point reversed,
 She bore the blade of Liberty.

X.

And only one among us — him

We pleased not — he was seldom pleased :

He saw not far : his eyes were dim :

But ours he swore were all diseased.

“A ship of fools,” he shriek’d in spite,

“A ship of fools,” he sneer’d and wept.

And overboard one stormy night

He cast his body, and on we swept.

XI.

And never sail of ours was furl’d,

Nor anchor dropt at eve or morn ;

We loved the glories of the world,

But laws of nature were our scorn ;

For blasts would rise and rave and cease,

But whence were those that drove the sail

Across the whirlwind’s heart of peace,

And to and thro’ the counter-gale ?

XII.

Again to colder climes we came,

For still we follow’d where she led :

Now mate is blind and captain lame,

And half the crew are sick or dead.

But blind or lame or sick or sound

We follow that which flies before :

We know the merry world is round,

And we may sail for evermore.

IN THE VALLEY OF CAUTERETZ.

ALL along the valley, stream that flashest white,

Deepening thy voice with the deepening of the night,

All along the valley, where thy waters flow,

I walk’d with one I loved two and thirty years ago.

All along the valley while I walk’d to-day,

The two and thirty years were a mist that rolls away ;

For all along the valley, down thy rocky bed,

Thy living voice to me was as the voice of the dead,

And all along the valley, by rock and cave and tree,

The voice of the dead was a living voice to me.

THE FLOWER.

ONCE in a golden hour
I cast to earth a seed.
Up there came a flower,
The people said, a weed.

To and fro they went
Thro' my garden-bower,
And muttering discontent
Cursed me and my flower.

Then it grew so tall
It wore a crown of light,
But thieves from o'er the wall
Stole the seed by night.

Sow'd it far and wide
By every town and tower.
Till all the people cried,
"Splendid is the flower."

Read my little fable:
He that runs may read.
Most can raise the flowers now,
For all have got the seed.

And some are pretty enough,
And some are poor indeed;
And now again the people
Call it but a weed.

REQUIESCAT.

FAIR is her cottage in its place,
Where yon broad water sweetly, slowly glides
It sees itself from thatch to base
Dream in the sliding tides.

And fairer she, but ah how soon to die!
Her quiet dream of life this hour may cease.
Her peaceful being slowly passes by
To some more perfect peace.

THE SAILOR BOY.

HE rose at dawn and, fired with hope,
Shot o'er the seething harbor-bar,
And reach'd the ship and caught the rope,
And whistled to the morning-star.

And while he whistled long and loud
He heard a fierce mermaiden cry,
"O boy, tho' thou art young and proud,
I see the place where thou wilt lie.

"The sands and yeasty surges mix
In caves about the dreary bay,
And on thy ribs the limpet sticks,
And in thy heart the scrawl shall play."

"Fool," he answer'd, "death is sure
To those that stay and those that roam,
But I will nevermore endure
To sit with empty hands at home.

"My mother clings about my neck,
My sisters crying, 'Stay for shame;'
My father raves of death and wreck,
They are all to blame, they are all to blame.

"God help me! save I take my part
Of danger on the roaring sea,
A devil rises in my heart,
Far worse than any death to me."

THE ISLET.

"WHITHER, O whither, love, shall we go,
For a score of sweet little summers or so,"
The sweet little wife of the singer said,
On the day that follow'd the day she was wed.
"Whither, O whither, love, shall we go?"
And the singer shaking his curly head
Turn'd as he sat, and struck the keys
There at his right with a sudden crash,
Singing, "And shall it be over the seas
With a crew that is neither rude nor rash,
But a bevy of Eroses apple-cheek'd,
In a shallop of crystal ivory-beak'd,
With a satin sail of a ruby glow,
To a sweet little Eden on earth that I know,
A mountain islet pointed and peak'd;
Waves on a diamond shingle dash,
Cataract brooks to the ocean run,
Fairily-delicate palaces shine
Mixt with myrtle and clad with vine,
And overstream'd and silvery-streak'd
With many a rivulet high against the Sun
The facets of the glorious mountain flash
Above the valleys of palm and pine."

"Thither, O thither, love, let us go."

"No, no, no!

For in all that exquisite isle; my dear,
There is but one bird with a musical throat,
And his compass is but of a single note,
That it makes one weary to hear."

"Mock me not! mock me not! love, let us go."

"No, love, no.

For the bud ever breaks into bloom on the tree,
And a storm never wakes on the lonely sea,
And a worm is there in the lonely wood,
That pierces the liver and blackens the blood,
And makes it a sorrow to be."

THE RINGLET.

"YOUR ringlets, your ringlets,
That look so golden-gay,
If you will give me one, but one,
To kiss it night and day,
Then never chilling touch of Time
Will turn it silver-gray;
And then shall I know it is all true gold
To flame and sparkle and stream as of old,
Till all the comets in heaven are cold,
And all her stars decay."
"Then take it, love, and put it by;
This cannot change, nor yet can I."

2.

"My ringlet, my ringlet,
That art so golden-gay,
Now never chilling touch of Time
Can turn thee silver-gray;
And a lad may wink, and a girl may hint,
And a fool may say his say;
For my doubts and fears were all amiss,
And I swear henceforth by this and this,
That a doubt will only come for a kiss.
And a fear to be kiss'd away."
"Then kiss it, love, and put it by:
If this can change, why so can I."

II.

O Ringlet, O Ringlet,
I kiss'd you night and day,
And Ringlet, O Ringlet,
You still are golden-gay,

But Ringlet, O Ringlet,
 You should be silver-gray :
 For what is this which now I'm told,
 I that took you for true gold,
 She that gave you 's bought and sold,
 Sold, sold.

2.

O Ringlet, O Ringlet,
 She blush'd a rosy red,
 When Ringlet, O Ringlet,
 She clipt you from her head,
 And Ringlet, O Ringlet,
 She gave you me, and said,
 "Come, kiss it, love, and put it by :
 If this can change, why so can I."
 O fie, you golden nothing, fie,
 You golden lie.

3.

O Ringlet, O Ringlet,
 I count you much to blame,
 For Ringlet, O Ringlet,
 You put me much to shame,
 So Ringlet, O Ringlet,
 I doom you to the flame.
 For what is this which now I learn,
 Has given all my faith á turn ?
 Burn, you glossy heretic, burn,
 Burn, burn.

A WELCOME TO ALEXANDRA.

MARCH 7, 1863.

SEA-KINGS' daughter from over the sea,
 Alexandra !

Saxon and Norman and Dane are we,
 But all of us Danes in our welcome of thee,
 Alexandra !

Welcome her, thunders of fort and of fleet !
 Welcome her, thundering cheer of the street !
 Welcome her, all things youthful and sweet,
 Scatter the blossom under her feet !
 Break, happy land, into earlier flowers !

Make music, O bird, in the new-budded bowers !
 Blazon your mottos of blessing and prayer !
 Welcome her, welcome her, all that is ours !
 Warble, O bugle, and trumpet, blare !
 Flags, flutter out upon turrets and towers !
 Flames, on the windy headland flare !
 Utter your jubilee, steeple and spire !
 Clash, ye bells, in the merry March air !
 Flash, ye cities, in rivers of fire !
 Rush to the roof, sudden rocket, and higher
 Melt into stars for the land's desire !
 Roll and rejoice, jubilant voice,
 Roll as a ground-swell dash'd on the strand,
 Roar as the sea when he welcomes the land,
 And welcome her, welcome the land's desire,
 The sea-kings' daughter as happy as fair,
 Blissful bride of a blissful heir,
 Bride of the heir of the kings of the sea —
 O joy to the people and joy to the throne,
 Come to us, love us, and make us your own :
 For Saxon or Dane or Norman we,
 Teuton or Celt, or whatever we be,
 We are each all Dane in our welcome of thee,
Alexandra !

A DEDICATION.

DEAR, near, and true — no truer Time himself
 Can prove you, tho' he make you evermore
 Dearer and nearer, as the rapid of life
 Shoots to the fall — take this and pray that he,
 Who wrote it, honoring your sweet faith in him,
 May trust himself; and spite of praise and scorn,
 As one who feels the immeasurable world,
 Attain the wise indifference of the wise;
 And after Autumn past — if left to pass
 His autumn into seeming-leafless days —
 Draw toward the long frost and longest night,
 Wearing his wisdom lightly, like the fruit
 Which in our winter woodland looks a flower.*

* The fruit of the Spindle-tree (*Euonymus Europæus*).

BÖADICÉA.

WHILE about the shore of Mona those Neronian legionaries
Burnt and broke the grove and altar of the Druid and
Druidess,
Far in the East Boädicéa, standing loftily chärioted,
Mad and maddening all that heard her in her fierce volu-
bility,
Girt by half the tribes of Britain, near the colony Cámu-
lodúne,
Yell'd and shriek'd between her daughters o'er a wild con-
federacy.

“They that scorn the tribes and call us Britain’s barbar-
ous populaces,
Did they hear mè, would they listen, did they pity me sup-
plicating?
Shall I heed them in their anguish? shall I brook to be
supplicated?
Hear Icenian, Catieuchlanian, hear Coritanian, Trinobant!
Must their ever-ravening eagle’s beak and talon annihilate
us?
Tear the noble heart of Britain, leave it gorily quivering?
Bark an answer, Britain’s raven! bark and blacken innu-
merable,
Blacken round the Roman carrion, make the carcase a
skeleton,
Kite and kestrel, wolf and wolfkin, from the wilderness.
wallow in it,

Till the face of Bel be brighten'd, Taranis be propitiated.
 Lo their colony half-defended ! lo their colony, Cámulodúne !
 There the horde of Roman robbers mock at a barbarous
 adversary.
 There the live of Roman liars worship a gluttonous em-
 peror-idiot.
 Such is Rome, and this her deity : hear it, Spirit of Cás-
 sivêlaín !

“ Hear it, Gods ! the Gods have heard it, O Icenian, O
 Coritanian !
 Doubt not ye the Gods have answer'd, Catieuchlanian, Tri-
 nobant.
 These have told us all their anger in miraculous utterances,
 Thunder, a flying fire in heaven, a murmur heard aërially,
 Phantom sound of blows descending, moan of an enemy
 massacred,
 Phantom wail of women and children, multitudinous agonies.
 Bloodily flow'd the Tamesa rolling phantom bodies of horses
 and men ;
 Then a phantom colony smoulder'd on the reflux estuary ;
 Lastly yonder yester-even, suddenly giddily tottering —
 There was one who watch'd and told me — down their
 statue of Victory fell.
 Lo their precious Roman bantling, lo the colony Cámulo-
 dúne,
 Shall we teach it a Roman lesson ? shall we care to be
 pitiful ?
 Shall we deal with it as an infant ? shall we dandle it
 amorously ?

“ Hear Icenian, Catieuchlanian, hear Coritanian, Trinobant !
 While I roved about the forest, long and bitterly meditating.
 There I heard them in the darkness, at the mystical cere-
 mony,
 Loosely robed in flying raiment, sang the terrible prophet-
 esses.
 ‘ Fear not, isle of blowing woodland, isle of silvery parapets !
 Tho’ the Roman eagle shadow thee, tho’ the gathering
 enemy narrow thee,
 Thou shalt wax and he shall dwindle, thou shalt be the
 mighty one yet !
 Thine the liberty, thine the glory, thine the deeds to be
 celebrated,

Thine the myriad-rolling ocean, light and shadow illimitable,

Thine the lands of lasting summer, many-blossoming Paradises,

Thine the North and thine the South and thine the battle-thunder of God.'

So they chanted: how shall Britain light upon auguries happier?

So they chanted in the darkness, and there cometh a victory now.

"Hear Icenian, Catieuchlanian, hear Coritanian, Trinobant!

Me the wife of rich Prasutagus, me the lover of liberty,

Me they seized and me they tortured, me they lash'd and humiliated,

Me the sport of ribald Veterans, mine of ruffian violators!

See they sit, they hide their faces, miserable in ignominy!

Wherefore in me burns an anger, not by blood to be satiated

Lo the palaces and the temple, lo the colony Càmulodúne!

There they ruled, and thence they wasted all the flourishing territory,

Thither at their will they haled the yellow-ringleted Britoness —

Bloodily, bloodily fall the battle-axe, unexhausted, inexorable.

Shout Icenian, Catieuchlanian, shout Coritanian, Trinobant,

Till the victim hear within and yearn to hurry precipitously

Like the leaf in a roaring whirlwind, like the smoke in a hurricane whirl'd.

Lo the colony, there they rioted in the city of Cúnobelíne!

There they drank in cups of emerald, there at tables of ebony lay,

Rolling on their purple couches in their tender effeminacy.

There they dwelt and there they rioted; there — there — they dwell no more.

Burst the gates, and burn the palaces, break the works of the statuary,

Take the hoary Roman head and shatter it, hold it abominable,

Cut the Roman boy to pieces in his lust and voluptuousness,

Lash the maiden into swooning, me they lash'd and humiliated,

Chop the breasts from off the mother, dash the brains of the
 little one out,
 Up my Britons, on my chariot, on my chargers, trample
 them under us."

So the Queen Boödicéa, standing loftily charioted,
 Brandishing in her hand a dart and rolling glances lioness-
 like,
 Yell'd and shrieked between her daughters in her fierce
 volubility.
 Till her people all around the royal chariot agitated,
 Madly dash'd the darts together, writhing barbarous lineä-
 ments,
 Made the noise of frosty woodlands, when they shiver in
 January,
 Roar'd as when the rolling breakers boom and blanch on
 the precipices,
 Yell'd as when the winds of winter tear an oak on a prom-
 ontory.
 So the silent colony hearing her tumultuous adversaries
 Clash the darts and on the buckler beat with rapid unani-
 mous hand,
 Thought on all her evil tyrannies, all her pitiless avarice,
 Till she felt the heart within her fall and flutter tremulously,
 Then her pulses at the clamoring of her enemy fainted away.
 Out of evil evil flourishes, out of tyranny tyranny buds.
 Ran the land with Roman slaughter, multitudinous agonies.
 Perish'd many a maid and matron, many a valorous legion
 ary.
 Fell the colony, city, and citadel, London, Verulam, Cámu-
 lodúne.

IN QUANTITY.

MILTON.

Alcaics.

O MIGHTY-MOUTH'D inventor of harmonies,
 O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,
 God-gifted organ-voice of England,
 Milton, a name to resound for ages;
 Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,

Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armories,
 Tower, as the deep-domed empyrëan
 Rings to the roar of an angel onset —
 Me rather all that bowery loneliness,
 The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring,
 And bloom profuse and cedar arches
 Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean,
 Where some refulgent sunset of India
 Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
 And crimson-hued the stately palmwoods
 Whisper in odorous heights of even.

Hendecasyllabics.

O YOU chorus of indolent reviewers,
 Irresponsible, indolent reviewers,
 Look, I come to the test, a tiny poem
 All composed in a metre of Catullus,
 All in quantity, careful of my motion,
 Like the skater on ice that hardly bears him,
 Lest I fall unawares before the people,
 Waking laughter in indolent reviewers.
 Should I flounder awhile without a tumble
 Thro' this metrification of Catullus,
 They should speak to me not without a welcome,
 All that chorus of indolent reviewers.
 Hard, hard, hard is it, only not to tumble,
 So fantastical is the dainty metre.
 Wherefore slight me not wholly, nor believe me
 Too presumptuous, indolent reviewers.
 O blatant Magazines, regard me rather —
 Since I blush to belaud myself a moment —
 As some rare little rose, a piece of inmost
 Horticultural art, or half coquette-like
 Maiden, not to be greeted unbenignly.

SPECIMEN OF A TRANSLATION OF THE ILIAD
 IN BLANK VERSE.

So Hector said, and sea-like roar'd his host;
 Then loosed their sweating horses from the yoke,
 And each beside his chariot bound his own;

And oxen from the city, and goodly sheep
 In haste they drove, and honey-hearted wine
 And bread from out the houses brought, and heap'd
 Their firewood, and the winds from off the plain
 Roll'd the rich vapor far into the heaven.
 And these all night upon the bridge * of war
 Sat glorying ; many a fire before them blazed :
 As when in heaven the stars about the moon
 Look beautiful, when all the winds are laid,
 And every height comes out, and jutting peak
 And valley, and the immeasurable heavens
 Break open to their highest, and all the stars
 Shine, and the Shepherd gladdens in his heart :
 So many a fire between the ships and stream
 Of Xanthus blazed before the towers of Troy,
 A thousand on the plain ; and close by each
 Sat fifty in the blaze of burning fire ;
 And champing golden grain, the horses stood
 Hard by their chariots, waiting for the dawn.†

Iliad 8. 542-561.

THE CAPTAIN.

A LEGEND OF THE NAVY.

HE that only rules by terror
 Doeth grievous wrong.
 Deep as Hell I count his error.
 Let him hear my song.
 Brave the Captain was : the seamen
 Made a gallant crew,
 Gallant sons of English freemen,
 Sailors bold and true.
 But they hated his oppression,
 Stern he was and rash ;
 So for every light transgression
 Doom'd them to the lash.
 Day by day more harsh and cruel
 Seem'd the Captain's mood.

* Or, ridge.

† Or more literally —

And eating hoary grain and pulse the steeds
 Stood by their cars, waiting the thronèd morn.

Secret wrath like smother'd fuel
 Burnt in each man's blood.
Yet he hoped to purchase glory,
 Hoped to make the name
Of his vessel great in story,
 Wheresoe'er he came.
So they passed by capes and islands,
 Many a harbor-mouth,
Sailing under palmy highlands
 Far within the South.
On a day when they were going
 O'er the lone expanse,
In the north. her canvas flowing,
 Rose a ship of France.
Then the Captain's color heighten'd,
 Joyful came his speech :
But a cloudy gladness lighten'd
 In the eyes of each.
"Chase," he said : the ship flew forward,
 And the wind did blow ;
Stately, lightly, went she Norward,
 Till she near'd the foe.
Then they look'd at him they hated,
 Had what they desired :
Mute with folded arms they waited —
 Not a gun was fired.
But they heard the foeman's thunder
 Roaring out their doom ;
All the air was torn in sunder,
 Crashing went the boom,
Spars were splinter'd, decks were shatter'd,
 Bullets fell like rain ;
Over mast and deck were scatter'd
 Blood and brains of men.
Spars were splinter'd ; decks were broken :
 Every mother's son —
Down they dropt — no word was spoken —
 Each beside his gun.
On the decks as they were lying,
 Were their faces grim.
In their blood, as they lay dying,
 Did they smile on him.
Those, in whom he had reliance
 For his noble name,

With one smile of still defiance
 Sold him unto shame.
 Shame and wrath his heart confounded,
 Pale he turn'd and red,
 Till himself was deadly wounded,
 Falling on the dead.
 Dismal error! fearful slaughter!
 Years have wander'd by,
 Side by side beneath the water
 Crew and Captain lie;
 There the sunlit ocean tosses
 O'er them mouldering,
 And the lonely seabird crosses
 With one waft of the wing.

COME not, when I am dead,
 To drop thy foolish tears upon my grave,
 To trample round my fallen head,
 And vex the unhappy dust thou wouldst not save.
 There let the wind sweep and the plover cry;
 But thou, go by.

Child, if it were thine error or thy crime
 I care no longer, being all unblest:
 Wed whom thou wilt, but I am sick of Time,
 And I desire to rest.
 Pass on, weak heart, and leave me where I lie:
 Go by, go by.

MY life is full of weary days,
 But good things have not kept aloof,
 Nor wandered into other ways:
 I have not lack'd thy mild reproof,
 Nor golden largess of thy praise.

And now shake hands across the brink
 Of that deep grave to which I go:
 Shake hands once more: I cannot sink
 So far — far down, but I shall know
 Thy voice, and answer from below.

THREE SONNETS TO A COQUETTE.

CARESS'D or chidden by the dainty hand,
 And singing airy trifles this or that,
 Light Hope at Beauty's call would perch and stand,
 And run thro' every change of sharp and flat;
 And Fancy came and at her pillow sat,
 When sleep had bound her in his rosy band,
 And chased away the still-recurring gnat,
 And woke her with a lay from fairy land.
 But now they live with Beauty less and less,
 For Hope is other Hope and wanders far,
 Nor cares to lisp in love's delicious creeds;
 And Fancy watches in the wilderness,
 Poor Fancy sadder than a single star,
 That sets at twilight in a land of reeds.

2.

The form, the form alone is eloquent!
 A nobler yearning never broke her rest
 Than but to dance and sing, be gayly drest,
 And win all eyes with all accomplishment:
 Yet in the waltzing-circle as we went,
 My fancy made me for a moment blest
 To find my heart so near the beauteous breast
 That once had power to rob it of content.
 A moment came the tenderness of tears,
 The phantom of a wish that once could move,
 A ghost of passion that no smiles restore —
 For ah! the slight coquette, she cannot love,
 And if you kiss'd her feet a thousand years,
 She still would take the praise, and care no more.

3.

Wan Sculptor, weepst thou to take the cast
 Of those dead lineaments that near thee lie?
 O sorrowest thou, pale Painter, for the past,
 In painting some dead friend from memory?
 Weep on: beyond his object Love can last:
 His object lives: more cause to weep have I:
 My tears, no tears of love, are flowing fast,
 No tears of love, but tears that Love can die.

I pledge her not in any cheerful cup,
 Nor care to sit beside her where she sits —
 Ah pity — hint it not in human tones,
 But breathe it into earth and close it up
 With secret death forever, in the pits
 Which some green Christmas crams with weary bones.

SONG.

LADY, let the rolling drums
 Beat to battle where thy warrior stands :
 Now thy face across his fancy comes,
 And gives the battle to his hands.

Lady, let the trumpets blow,
 Clasp thy little babes about thy knee :
 Now their warrior father meets the foe,
 And strikes him dead for thine and thee.

SONG.

HOME they brought him slain with spears.
 They brought him home at even-fall :
 All alone she sits and hears
 Echoes in his empty hall,
 Sounding on the morrow.

The Sun peep'd in from open field,
 The boy began to leap and prance,
 Rode upon his father's lance,
 Beat upon his father's shield —
 " O hush, my joy, my sorrow."

ON A MOURNER.

NATURE, so far as in her lies,
 Imitates God, and turns her face
 To every land beneath the skies,
 Counts nothing that she meets with base,
 But lives and loves in every place ;

2.

Fills out the homely quickset-screens,
And makes the purple lilac ripe,
Steps from her airy hill, and greens
The swamp, where hums the dropping snipe,
With moss and braided marish-pipe ;

3.

And on thy heart a finger lays,
Saying, " Beat quicker, for the time
Is pleasant, and the woods and ways
Are pleasant, and the beech and lime
Put forth and feel a gladder clime."

4.

And murmurs of a deeper voice,
Going before to some far shrine,
Teach that sick heart the stronger choice,
Till all thy life one way incline
With one wide will that closes thine.

5.

And when the zoning eve has died
Where yon dark valleys wind forlorn,
Come Hope and Memory, spouse and bride,
From out the borders of the morn,
With that fair child betwixt them born.

6.

And when no mortal motion jars
The blackness round the tombing sod,
Thro' silence and the trembling stars
Comes Faith from tracts no feet have trod,
And Virtue, like a household god

7.

Promising empire ; such as those
That once at dead of night did greet
Troy's wandering prince, so that he rose
With sacrifice, while all the fleet
Had rest by stony hills of Crete.

54/3465













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